

BUSINESS / BI

Peso at 3-year high of 52.09 due to foreigners buying stocks

Noli sued by former staff for illegal dismissal

By Michael Lim Ubac and Cynthia D. Balana

VICE PRESIDENT NOLI DE CASTRO, FORMER mainstay of the defunct television show "Magandang Gabi, Bayan," is facing a legal fight with employees of its producer, Bayan Productions Inc.

Seven writers, two researchers, three cameramen, two assistant cameramen

NOLI SUED/A6



STATE OF DISCONTENT: Protesters clash with policemen near Malacañang at a rally on Wednesday, one of several anti-VAT rallies held simultaneously.

REUTERS/RAHMAN ZAHORI

CBCP: Quit option stays

Lagdameo explains pastoral statement

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr., PDI Visayas Bureau
and Christian V. Esguerra

ILIOLO CITY—THE PRESIDENT OF THE Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines yesterday said that resignation remained an option for President Macapagal-Arroyo to resolve the "Hello Garcí" controversy.

Archbishop Angel Lagdameo also brushed aside criticisms that the Catholic Church was interfering in politics. "When people do not like what we are saying, then we will be criticized as interfering in politics," Lagdameo said.

The archbishop of Jaro said that the resignation option was contained in the July 10, 2005, pastoral statement issued by the

CBCP at the height of the wiretapping controversy that nearly unseated Ms Arroyo.

In last year's statement, the bishops stayed away from mounting calls for the President's resignation but said she should not ignore them.

Asked if last week's pastoral statement, issued after the

CBCP/A6



THE GREATEST SECRET

Manuel V. Pangilinan, named 2005 Man of the Year by the Management Association of the Philippines, reveals in his acceptance speech on Tuesday that when it comes to success, there are no secrets:

Success springs from old-fashioned values like honesty and diligence, hard work and commitment.

Town mates rush to defend Faeldon's girl

By Felipe V. Celino
PDI Visayas Bureau

ROXAS CITY—RELATIVES AND town mates of Capt. Candelaria Rivas in Mambusao town, Capiz, have come to the defense of the officer who is facing investigation for allegedly "coddling" Oakwood mutineer Capt. Nicancor Faeldon after he escaped from detention.

Her sister Santiago Rivas, a councilwoman of Barangay Maralag in Mambusao, said her family and town mates could not believe that "Lala," as the 33-year-old Candelaria is called, would be involved in the escape of Faeldon. (See related story on Page A2.)

"Lala is dedicated to her job. As a practicing lawyer, she knows the law," said Santiago of her younger sister, a member of the Armed Forces Judge Advocate General's Office (Jago).

Maralag Barangay Captain Danilo Leonor said he would not believe that Lala would do what was contrary to law, especially that her late father, Jesus Rivas, was a respected lawyer in their town.

He said the residents of Maralag had high respect for Lala for

UP study finds toxic heavy metals near Lafayette mine

TOXIC HEAVY METALS LIKE LEAD and mercury were found in sediments surrounding the mine of Lafayette Philippines Inc. on Rapu-Rapu Island in Albay, according to independent tests commissioned by an environmental group.

The mine of Lafayette Philippines, a subsidiary of an Australian mining company, is touted as the showcase project of the Ar-

oy administration's mining program.

Analysis by the University of the Philippines' Environmental Engineering Department of 34 samples gathered by a fact-finding team last November showed that all samples contained heavy metals.

The samples contained toxic metals like mercury, lead, cadmi-

um and arsenic, along with selenium, copper, chromium, barium, nickel and zinc, the Center for Environmental Concerns (CEC) said yesterday.

Heavy metals are a group of naturally occurring elements, which can be toxic to humans in high concentrations.

Mercury is a neurotoxin that damages the brain and causes

cancer. It may induce abortion in pregnant women. Lead affects motor skills and physical development, while arsenic poisons the blood and respiratory system.

Previous testing by the Environment Management Bureau found only the presence of cyanide on Rapu-Rapu Island.

"It's not just cyanide for which

UP STUDY/A8

FERTILIZER/A8

Martin Luther King's widow dies



THE DREAM that Coretta Scott King shared with her husband Martin Luther King Jr. did not die with him for she carried on to the mountaintop.

Bush: US must end addiction to ME oil

WASHINGTON—IN A STATE OF the Union speech that promised aggressive US engagement around the world, President George W. Bush on Tuesday said "America is addicted to oil" from the Middle East and must break its dependence.

Looking to restore confidence in his leadership, Bush stood before members of the US Congress and the rest of Washington's power elite in the chamber of the House of Representatives to map out an election-year agenda for Republicans. His speech was at times optimistic and at others combative.

And while he vowed to work to improve the tone of debate in Washington, he defended a do-

mestic spying program that had outraged Democrats. To his harshest critics on Iraq, he said "second-guessing is not a strategy."

With three years left in office, Bush is hoping to lift his political fortunes and those of his Republican allies in an election year with control of Congress up for grabs. He is coming off one of the toughest stretches of his presidency, and his job approval ratings hover in the high 30s to low 40s in most polls.

The former oilman outlined a green agenda, promoting the need to improve technologies in order to reduce US oil imports from the Middle East 75 percent

BUSH/A4

NEWS / A5

Deal to sell Fraport's stake in Piatco to Manila Hotel collapses

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph



Do you have a story to tell about Edsa I? The INQUIRER is looking for those untold stories (photos, too) that contributed, no matter how small, to the first People Power in 1986 that so stunned the world and inspired and emboldened people in chains everywhere to break free. The contributions that will be selected by the editors will be used for the INQUIRER's special celebration of the 20th anniversary of Edsa I. Send your contribution, with your address and contact number, not later than Feb. 15 to fidelmundo@inquirer.com.ph

300 camp out at Manny's gate waiting for 'balato'

By Aquiles Z. Zonia
PDI Mindanao Bureau

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—Scores of people are patiently waiting outside the house of Manny Pacquiao here for a "balato" (tip) after his victory over Mexican

300 CAMP OUT/A8



VAT sparks buying frenzy for cars, condos

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

A DISCOUNT EQUIVALENT TO 2 PERCENT of today's retail prices of big ticket items was enough to fuel a buying frenzy of sorts among the well-to-do.

Sales of condominiums, cars and plasma TVs rose sharply before Feb. 1, the day the government raised the rate of the expanded value-added tax (VAT) from 10 percent to 12 percent.

Most retailers reported a surge in sales as buyers rushed to beat the 2-percentage-point increase in the VAT rate, said Samie Lim, Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry vice president.

"These buyers were probably set on buying these items this year and they just advanced

VAT SPARKS/A8

FORECAST: Eastern Luzon will have mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers. Visayas and Mindanao will have mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers.

COMPILED BY CYBILL BONADURE, FORECASTER/02/02/06 SOURCE: PAGASA

Second FRONT PAGE

Text us your feedback: inquirer news name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2006

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy
Batangas	Partly Cloudy
Tayabas	Cloudy with Rain
Luzon	Cloudy with Rain
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rain
Cagayan	Partly Cloudy

Palawan	Cloudy with Rain
Roxas	Cloudy with Rain
Tacloban	Cloudy with Rain
Gan, Batanes	Cloudy with Rain
Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rain
Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rain
Davao	Cloudy with Rain

5 Faeldon coddlers arrested

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

THE MILITARY ACKNOWLEDGED FOR THE FIRST TIME YESTERDAY that Capt. Nicanor Faeldon had managed to sneak in and out of several military and police camps while he was on the lam and said they had taken in for questioning at least five soldiers who had helped the Marine officer pull off those stunts before he was recaptured last week.

Military spokesman Col. Tristan Kison admitted also that Faeldon and other leaders of the Oakwood mutiny continue to enjoy support from within the ranks.

"We're investigating the extent of the support," he added.

Kison made the statements as he disclosed that five enlisted men, at least two of whom were part of the July 27, 2003 Oakwood mutiny, were being questioned for allegedly coddling Faeldon after he escaped from his guards following a court appearance in Makati last Dec. 14.

Kison identified two of the five soldiers as Marine Ptg. Lorenzo Caranza and Hardy Glaraga who were flown in yesterday morning from the Western Command headquarters in Palawan and brought to the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (Isafp) compound in Camp Aguinaldo.

"It appears they facilitated Faeldon's movement [around Wescom], providing him a safehouse and transportation," Kison said. He took care to say they were "not arrested but invited for debriefing."

The three other enlisted personnel suspected of having helped Faeldon were also being questioned but Kison did not say who they were or where they were being held.

Caranza and Glaraga were among 184 rebel soldiers released last May after a plea bargain in which they took a three-rank demotion and a pay cut for six months in exchange for the dismissal of court-martial charges.

According to Kison, the two were identified

as Faeldon's supporters while Faeldon underwent debriefing by military intelligence following his recapture.

Faeldon through his website www.pilipino.org.ph had shown videos and photos of himself inside the Wescom headquarters in Puerto Princesa City last Dec. 21. More such videos followed showing him inside the Southern Command headquarters in Zamboanga City, and at the Philippine National Police headquarters in Camp Crame.

After his arrest last Jan. 27 — with Capt. Candelaria Rivas, a military prosecutor handling the Oakwood mutiny court-martial — supporters released videos and photos of Faeldon taken inside the Central Command headquarters in Cebu City and inside the military general headquarters in Camp Aguinaldo.

Until Kison's admission yesterday, the military had dismissed the photos as the product of electronic manipulation.

Meanwhile, Sen. Rodolfo Biazon yesterday attested that Faeldon was not being tortured at Isafp, contrary to claims by Faeldon's lawyer Roel Poblado.

Biazon, an ex-military chief of staff and former Marine, brought with him a team of Senate doctors who checked Faeldon and found "no physical evidence of torture."

Aside from Biazon, Faeldon was also visited yesterday by two siblings, lawyer Gideon Mortel and ex-wife Tita Untalan. With reports from Nikko Dixon and Alequin Papa



TONI BLACKMAN

Free concerts by US 'hip-hop ambassador'

FINALLY, WASHINGTON IS SENDING A woman ambassador to Manila — a "Hip-Hop Ambassador," that is.

The US government-endorsed Toni Blackman Hip-Hop Ensemble, which is currently touring Southeast Asia, will be giving free concerts in Manila, Davao and Cebu City this week, with the US Embassy serving as main sponsor.

"Ms Blackman is the US Hip-Hop Ambassador, a title bestowed upon her by the US Department of State in recognition of her steadfast commitment to integrating hip-hop performance with social education," the embassy said in a statement on Tuesday.

The youth-oriented shows are in line with the embassy's program of showcasing various sides of American culture, press attache Matthew Lussenhop told the INQUIRER yesterday.

Cojuangcos hit gov't plan to sell PLDT shares

By Armand N. Nocum

LAWYERS OF THE LATE RAMON Cojuangco, one of the major owners of the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., yesterday assailed a reported government plan to dispose of a large block of PLDT shares which the Supreme Court recently declared as being part of the ill-gotten wealth of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

Lawyer Leonardo Siguion-Reyna, counsel for the Cojuangco heirs, said the plan to sell was "premature" and "baseless" as the Cojuangcos have yet to file a motion for reconsideration of the SC decision.

The high court ruled last week that the government could proceed with the sequestration of more than a billion pesos worth of shares in PLDT as it affirmed the Presidential Commission on Good Government's suit that the shares were ill-gotten and should go to the government.

The dispute involved ownership of 111,415 shares of the Philippine Telecommunications Investment Corp., which owned a 28-percent stake in PLDT at the time of the suit, in the name of Prime Holdings Inc. The Cojuangco family owned a controlling stake at PLDT, making it the biggest stockholders of PLDT at the time.

The PCCG claimed that PTIC formed part of the Marcos ill-gotten assets and that Cojuangco and PHI acquired the PLDT shares as Marcos dummies.

In a statement, Siguion-Reyna said the court "failed to take into account well-established facts on the record that clearly showed Mr. Cojuangco

owned the disputed shares."

"Mr. Ramon Cojuangco may have been a close friend of former President Ferdinand Marcos but he was not a person who asked for or received any special favors from and cannot therefore be considered a crony," he said.

"(Cojuangco's) interest in PLDT were all the fruits of his own labor and his acquisitions were made without the participation of former President Marcos," he added.

In its Jan. 20 decision, the high court upheld the PCCG claim that the government was the rightful owner of the 111,415 shares of PTIC in the name of PHI.

The case was a consolidation of five separate petitions between the government, the Cojuangcos and businessman Alfonso Yuchengco arising from Sandiganbayan Civil Case No. 2 initiated by the PCCG against Marcos, their three children as well as other individuals.

In its ruling, the court said the PCCG "can and must recover for the Republic the 111,415 shares being held by PHI, they bearing the character of ill-gotten wealth whether they be in the hands of Marcos or those of Cojuangco."

The PTIC shares are being contested by the estate of the late Ramon Cojuangco and his wife, Imelda O. Cojuangco.

In 1999, Imelda Marcos, the widow of the dictator, filed a cross-claim with the Sandiganbayan, claiming that she and her late husband owned the 42 percent of PLDT held by the Cojuangco-Ongsiaco families, the 7.8 percent held by Yuchengco and the 3.1 percent held by businessman Antonio Meir.

Palace disowns deal with Danding

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Philip C. Tubeza

MALACANANG YESTERDAY claimed it was not privy to the alleged compromise deal being hammered out by the Presidential Commission on Good Government with businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco over the P130 billion sequestered shares in San Miguel Corp.

"He is doing it on his own. And we have confidence that as chair of PCCG, Sabio must have basis in law for his actions," said Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita in a briefing.

"I have no hold on such details."

PCCG chair Camilo Sabio has refused to divulge details of a compromise deal on the coconut levy funds with Cojuangco (who is currently San Miguel chair) despite intense grilling from senators who have threatened to give the agency a token P1 budget instead of the P67 million it had sought.

Ermita could not also explain why the PCCG was eager to enter into a settlement agreement with

Cojuangco when the government had scored key victories in the Supreme Court in proving that the San Miguel shares being claimed by Cojuangco were part of former President Marcos' ill-gotten wealth.

Sabio had cited a provision in Executive Order No. 1, which bars any PCCG official from testifying before any legislative inquiry.

Yesterday, Sen. Joker Arroyo pressed Sabio to confirm whether President Macapagal-Arroyo approved negotiations with Cojuangco on the coco levy funds.

He noted that the P85 billion involved in the compromise deal was much bigger than all the ill-gotten wealth the PCCG had recovered from 1986 to 2004, including the seized P35 billion Marcos Swiss bank deposits.

Senators Juan Ponce Enrile and Edgardo Angara warned that Sabio's refusal to answer questions about the PCCG's performance was "a passport to plunder" since it would put the agency outside the oversight powers of Congress or even the courts.

Indian president here tomorrow for state visit

INDIAN PRESIDENT APJ ABDUL Kalam arrives tomorrow for a four-day state visit, the first trip to the Philippines by an Indian head of state in 15 years, the Department of Foreign Affairs announced yesterday.

Kalam will sign a defense cooperation agreement and explore trade and investment opportunities in technology and health services, including medical tourism.

President Fidel V. Ramos visited India in 1997, the DFA said.

Kalam will hold official talks with President Macapagal-Arroyo on Saturday, and address a joint session of Congress on Feb. 6.

An eminent scientist in his country, Kalam will be meeting with students, teachers and sci-

ents at the University of the Philippines and the Philippine Science High School in Quezon City.

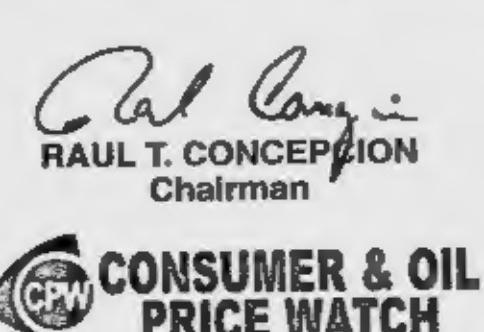
India and the Philippines are considered leaders in business processes outsourcing and have strong potentials in medical tourism, Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto Romulo said in a statement.

The government has also identified India as a major source of affordable medicines, he said.

Philippine imports from India reached \$290.3 million against exports of \$79.1 million as of October 2005.

The two countries hold annual security dialogues, and a defense accord, covering naval and maritime cooperation, is expected to be signed during the visit.

Volt Comtens



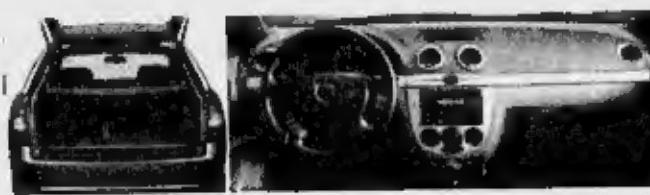
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The most interesting people and personalities have their home in the pages of the Sunday Inquirer Magazine

DAILY INQUIRER

Bush: US must end addiction to Mideast oil

From page A1

by 2025.

Soaring gasoline prices are a central factor in Bush's fall from grace with Americans. Oil prices are close to record levels and Exxon just reported record profits of \$10.7 billion in the fourth quarter of 2005.

"America is addicted to oil, which is often imported from unstable parts of the world," Bush said. "The best way to break this addiction is through technology."

He vowed to fund additional research into cutting-edge methods of producing ethanol not just from corn but from wood-chips or grasses and set a six-year goal for making this alternative fuel practical and competitive.

"By applying the talent and technology of America, this country can dramatically improve our environment, move beyond a petroleum-based economy, and make our dependence on Middle Eastern oil a thing of the past," he said.

Critics doubted Bush ever really severed his ties from the oil industry and were skeptical he would put the kind of effort into conservation and alternative fuel research they say is needed.

His previous energy initiatives have had little impact on prices or supplies.

End hollow promises

"The president needs to put an end to his hollow promises and take action to reduce our dependency on foreign oil, the future of the United States depends on it," said Massachusetts Democratic Rep. Ed Markey.

Bush also vowed the United States will remain aggressively engaged around the world and will reject the temptation of protectionism and isolationism under his watch.

He said he would never give up in his battle against radical Islam, saying America's enemies and friends should be certain: "The United States will not retreat from the world, and we will never surrender to evil."

The comments amounted to a rejection of those Democrats and others who claimed US policies in Iraq and in the war on terrorism were doing more harm than good abroad.

No troop cut

On Iraq, Bush argued against those Democrats who have been calling for a timetable for a phased redeployment of US troops in Iraq, saying a "sudden withdrawal of our forces from Iraq would abandon our Iraqi allies to death and



THE UNITED STATES will not withdraw from the world, declares President George W. Bush in his State of the Union Address at Capitol Hill on Tuesday. He promised he would never give up his battle against radical Islam and to reject protectionism and isolationism.

den reduction in force any time soon.

He offered little hope of a US

as usual saying it depended on how quickly Iraqi forces can defend themselves.

In a nod to critics who contend the war was fought over false pretenses, Bush said: "However we feel about the decisions and debates of the past, our nation has only one option: We must keep our word, defeat our enemies, and stand behind the American military in its vital mission."

In the Democratic reaction to Bush's speech, Virginia's new governor, Tim Kaine, said Democrats wanted to win the war in Iraq but wondered if Bush's policies were the best way.

"We now know that the American people were given inaccurate information about the reasons for invading Iraq. We now know that our troops in Iraq were not given the best body armor or the best intelligence," Kaine said.

Mentioning several world hot spots, Bush said "the world must not permit" Iran to develop a nuclear weapon amid international efforts to force Tehran not to enrich uranium.

Iran and Palestine

He said Iran was being "held hostage" by Islamic clerics and

that the United States hoped one day to be friends with a free and democratic Iran.

And Bush laid down what might ultimately be conditions for US relations with Hamas, the Islamic militant group that won a stunning victory in Palestinian parliamentary elections last week.

"The Palestinian people have voted in elections, now the leaders of Hamas must recognize Israel, disarm, reject terrorism and work for lasting peace," Bush said.

No freedoms in 4 states

In a sign of concern about non-Muslim as well as Muslim states, Bush cited Burma and Zimbabwe—along with Iran, North Korea and Syria—as countries where freedoms were lacking and must be instilled.

Due to election year realities, there were no sweeping proposals along the lines of his big Social Security revamp, which fizzled after its high-profile roll-out a year ago.

In the televised speech before millions, Bush called for a bipartisan commission to study the solvency of the Social Security retirement system, as well as the Medicare and Medicaid health insurance programs. Reuters

Martin Luther King's widow dies in her sleep; 78

From page A1

GMT) of a heart attack at a holistic clinic in Rosarito, Mexico, said institution director Humberto Simanti. She had also been fighting ovarian cancer.

Scott King owned a house in the Mexican seaside town, located on the Pacific coast just south of the US border, local police said.

Her body was being taken to Atlanta, Georgia, for burial.

Remarkable, courageous

President George W. Bush led political tributes for Scott King, who last year suffered a heart attack and a stroke.

"Mrs. King was a remarkable and courageous woman, and a great civil rights leader," Bush

said in a statement. "Mrs. King's lasting contributions to freedom and equality have made America a better and more compassionate nation."

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, the highest ranking African-American in the US government, said the world had "lost a champion of human rights."

Rev. Al Sharpton, a prominent civil rights activist and family friend, remembered Scott King as a "compassionate, caring, yet firm matriarch of the movement for justice."

Towering presence

A tribute also came from South Africa, where she traveled in 1994 to see Nelson Mandela become the country's first demo-

cratically elected president at the end of apartheid.

"In our own struggle against apartheid in South Africa, Coretta and Dr. Martin Luther King were at all times a towering presence, who, through their experiences, provided guidance, inspiration and, indeed, helped us to maintain the unshakable belief that we, too, would overcome," said South African President Thabo Mbeki.

Coretta Scott, a promising singer, married Martin Luther King Jr. in 1953 and immediately supported his equal rights campaign, often speaking in the Nobel Peace Prize laureate's place when he was unable to attend an engagement.

She was with him in 1963 when he delivered his famous "I

Have a Dream" speech at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington.

Four days after his assassination on April 4, 1968, in Memphis, Scott King led an equal rights march of 50,000 people through the streets of the Tennessee city where her husband died.

Nonviolent change

In the years after, while raising four children, she campaigned fiercely to keep alive her husband's message of nonviolent change.

She created The King Center in Atlanta, where flags were at half mast on Tuesday. Local politician and scores of people went to the center with wreaths. The US Congress also lowered its flags in her honor in Washington.

In the 1980s Scott King pushed

for the creation of a national holiday honoring her husband and his crusade to eradicate racial segregation.

The holiday was established in 1986 and is now observed on the third Monday of January.

Scott King participated in protests in Washington against South Africa's apartheid in the 1980s, and later opposed the US 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Big dreams

Born April 27, 1927, in segregated Alabama, Coretta grew up on her parents' farm. Though poor, the parents had big dreams for their three children.

Her father, Obediah Scott, was the first black man in the area to own a truck and then launched a truck-farming business, which drew opposition from white neighbors.

Her mother, Bernice, frustrated that buses took only white children to school, rented a bus to transport black children to

classes.

In 1945, after graduating from high school, King followed her older sister Edith to Antioch College in Ohio, where she earned a degree in music and elementary education. Her sister was the college's first full-time black student.

Coretta went on to study at the New England Conservatory of Music in 1951 in Boston, where she met Martin Luther King Jr., who was a doctoral candidate at Boston University's theology school.

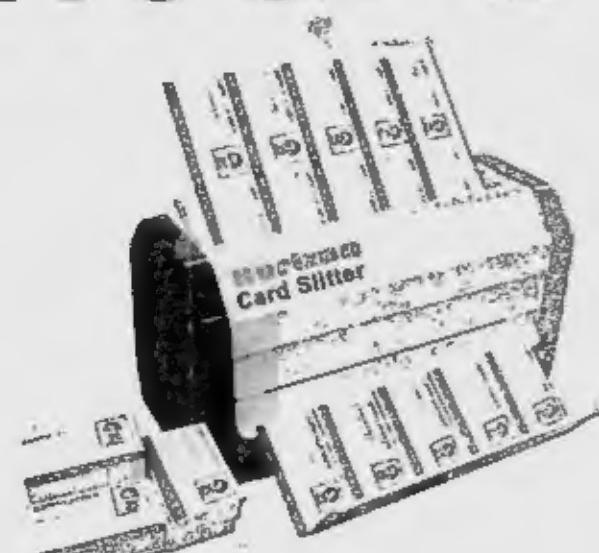
Turbulent years

The couple moved to Montgomery, Alabama, during some of the most turbulent years of the civil rights movement.

Their first daughter was born a few days before Martin Luther King Jr. led a boycott to end the racial segregation of Montgomery's buses—a watershed event in the civil rights movement.

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THE DAILY GOSPEL



Thursday, February 2, 2006

Presentation of the Lord

1st Reading: Mal 3:1-4

2nd Reading: Heb 2:14-18

Gospel: Luke 2:22-40 (or Luke 2:22-32)

When the day came for the purification according to the law of Moses, Joseph and Mary brought the baby up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, as it is written in the law of the Lord: Every firstborn male shall be consecrated to God. And they offered a sacrifice as ordered in the law of the Lord: a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.

There lived in Jerusalem at this time a very upright and devout man named Simeon; the Holy Spirit was in him. He looked forward to the time when the Lord would comfort Israel, and he had been assured by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before seeing the Messiah of the Lord. So he was led into the Temple by the Holy Spirit at the time the parents brought the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law.

Simeon took the child in his arms and blessed God, saying, "Now, O Lord, you can dismiss your servant in peace, for you have fulfilled your word and my eyes have seen your salvation, which you display for all the people to see."

Here is the light you will reveal to the nations and the glory of your people Israel."

Commentary

The prophet cries out that the one awaited will enter the sanctuary and is already here. Can we bear his presence, a refiner's fire that makes pure silver and gold? And Jesus is brought into the temple and presented to the Lord in accordance with the law of Moses. First born, he belongs to God alone. He will be peace. He will be a sign of contradiction in Israel. He will be the prophet who is the Word of the Lord. He is subject to human beings and to the Word of God. We too are presented to God in our baptism. Is this Word of God refining us into pure silver and gold, as Jesus was through obedience?

Claretian Publications Inc., 6 Mayumi St., UP Village, Diliman, Quezon City, UP PO. Box 4, Diliman, 1101 Quezon City; Tel.: 921-3984; Fax: 921-7429; E-mail: clc@claret.org Website: http://www.claret.org Claretian Publications Inc. & http://missions.claret.org (Claretians in the Philippines)

Corrections

IN THE JAN. 27 ISSUE, the front-page banner story—"Use of P100-M fund probed"—misstated the previous position held by Jocelyn Bolante in the Department of Agriculture. Bolante used to be an agriculture undersecretary—not secretary.

IN THE JAN. 29 ISSUE, a story on Page 5 of the Sunday Inquirer Magazine—"Don't label him leftist nor rightist, but call him passionate"—misstated in the subhead the name of one of the counsels of the Magdalene soldiers. The lawyer's name is Roberto Rafael—not Renato—Pulido.

IN LATER EDITIONS OF THE JAN. 29 ISSUE, the headline of a front-page story—"Taipans put in P5B to get 5M tourists in 5 years"—misstated the amount that taipans are willing to invest to bring in tourists to the country. The taipans are investing \$5 billion—not P5 billion.

IN EARLY EDITIONS OF THE JAN. 31 ISSUE, a front-page story—"Mine firms warn of job, capital risks"—misstated in the lead paragraph that "up to 10 million jobs are at risk of economic dislocation over calls by Catholic bishops to repeal the Mining Act of 1995 and cancel all existing mining permits." What Philip Romualdez, president of the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines, indicated at a press conference was that about 10 million people faced economic dislocation if the bishops would have their way.

IN EARLY EDITIONS OF THE JAN. 31 ISSUE, the front-page banner story—"RP growth slower but surprising"—carried an erroneous byline. The correct byline is Michelle V. Remo—not Ramos.

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to the Day Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mascardo Street, Makati City, fax Nos. 897-47-93/94; e-mail address: daydesk@inquirer.com.ph.

Complaints about lack of fairness or objectivity may be sent to Lorna Kalaw Tiro, readers' advocate, e-mail address: readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph, or fax Nos. 897-47-93/94, Attn: Readers Advocate. Her phone number is 897-8808 Local 342.

**PLATINUM CODE PROMO WINNER**

INQUIRER president and CEO Alexandra "Sandy" Prieto-Romualdez congratulates Rico Benedicto for winning the grand prize of P200,000 in the **INQUIRER'S** Platinum Code Promo. Benedicto, 52, is from Quezon City. His name was drawn last December among the thousands of readers who texted their names and answers to the promo which was held in connection with the **INQUIRER's** 20th anniversary celebration.

NETOY JOHNSON

Sandigan allows Erap eye surgery

THE SANDIGANBAYAN SPECIAL DIVISION yesterday allowed ousted President Joseph Estrada to stay on at the San Juan Medical Center and undergo reconstructive surgery to remove excess eyelid skin which is said to be impairing his vision.

Dr. Lorenzo Hocson, Estrada's personal physician, had recommended the medical procedure and gave a detailed report of the disgraced leader's health condition to the anti-graft court.

Estrada was brought to the SJMC last Thursday because of an infection in his right eye that, doctors said, could be life-threatening if left untreated.

Hocson said Estrada's stay in the hospital could be extended for two or three days, or until Sunday, after his eyelid surgery.

He said that if doctors succeed in removing the infection with antibiotics, Estrada could undergo corrective surgery today.

Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio told reporters that an eye infection was a serious matter. He said this was why the prosecution panel did not oppose Estrada's being temporarily released from "rest house arrest" to undergo a check-up.

"Maybe they could even have the former President undergo a computer tomography scan to make sure that his condition was not brought about by a mild stroke," Villa-Ignacio suggested.

Hocson explained that the surgery, to be done on both eyelids, was meant to repair the eyelid muscles and correct their droop.

He stressed, however, that there was no problem with Estrada's vision.

"We cannot just operate on the infected eye. The correct surgical procedure is that we have to operate on both eyelids to ensure symmetry," Hocson told the smiling justices.

He also stressed that the operation was not for aesthetic reasons but was a medical procedure to correct a physical problem.

Aside from the eye check-up, Estrada will be going through a series of medical examinations.

In his report, Hocson said Estrada was suffering from preseptal cellulitis, an infection from an insect bite, and dermatochalasis, or excess skin in the eyelid.

The report was also signed by ophthalmologist Dr. Eduardo Sarabia who examined Estrada's infected eye.

"As yet, the patient's condition is not life-threatening but if the infection is left untreated, it could cause blindness and eventually affect the brain which would then make it life-threatening," Hocson said. Nelson F. Flores

Gov't eyes drones for spy missions

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO HAS ORDERED the purchase of unmanned spy planes to help guard the troubled southeast Asian archipelago's maritime borders, the presidential palace said Wednesday.

The executive order issued by Arroyo called for a "maritime aerial reconnaissance and surveillance" program to be supervised by the intelligence services, according to the text of the order released by her office.

Ms Arroyo authorized the "procurement or lease of unmanned aerial vehicles," or drones, as well as other reconnaissance and surveillance equipment, the statement said.

The new spy hardware shall provide "dominant situational awareness to swiftly and effectively interdict when an illegal activity occurs," she said.

The Philippines is grappling with both communist and Muslim separatist rebellions, as well as the threat of violence from Islamic militants with alleged links to the al-Qaida network.

Manila also is embroiled in a territorial dispute with its neighbors over the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea.

The drones will primarily fly over maritime zones to "enhance the national capability to gather near real-time video recording and information for decision-making needs," the Arroyo directive said.

The Philippines is an archipelago of more than 7,000 islands that shares a vast, common sea border with other Southeast Asian countries where al-Qaida-linked militants operate.

130

Deal to sell Fraport's stake in Piatco collapses

FRANKFURT/MANILA—FRAPORT AIRPORT operator Fraport said a deal to sell its stake in Philippine International Air Terminal Co. Inc. (Piatco), which built the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 project, to Manila Hotel for \$200 million has collapsed.

"Substantial roadblocks in reaching an agreement could not be removed," Fraport said in a statement on Wednesday.

Fraport said it was continuing to pursue compensation for its holding in the terminal through the World Bank after it was seized by the Philippine government in December 2004. Manila had rejected Fraport's request for \$425 million in compensation.

In Manila, the Supreme Court upheld on Wednesday its earlier order for the government to pay an initial P3 billion to the Fraport-led consortium that built the terminal.

Fraport said in August it had accepted Manila Hotel's offer for its stake in the Piatco

consortium and that it would receive an initial sum of \$50 million once it signed the deal, followed by the remaining \$150 million within six months of signing.

"After five months of discussions, Fraport has declared an end to negotiations," Fraport said. "For the intended transaction, among others, a waiver of right of first refusal by the co-shareholders was required. This waiver was not declared."

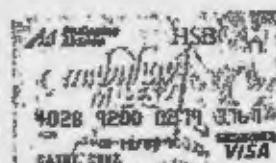
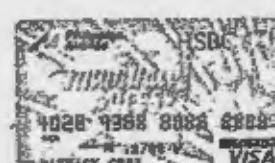
A source familiar with the matter told Reuters on Jan. 24 that the deal had not been concluded and was expected to fall through. And Fraport finance chief Stefan Schulte had told Reuters in November that the deal had been delayed and could yet fall.

Fraport said on Wednesday it was confident it had a strong case for compensation at the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes at the World Bank.

Reuters

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CBCP: Quit option stays

From page A1

prelates' first plenary this year, reflected what the CBCP felt about the unresolved political crisis, Lagdameo said: "Probably, partly, we can say that that is a statement of frustration."

"We did not change (the July 10 statement). So it still stays that the President listen to the voice of the people," Lagdameo told reporters here after the launching of the People's Graftwatch of Iloilo Inc.

3 options

The voluntary resignation of the President was one of three measures the CBCP proposed last year to put a closure to the worst political crisis hounding the Arroyo presidency.

The two other options were impeachment and the creation of a truth commission to look into allegations Ms Arroyo manipulated the May 2004 presidential election.

The opposition said wiretapped phone conversations purportedly between Ms Arroyo and

former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano suggested fraud was committed in the 2004 balloting.

Ms Arroyo's dominant allies in the House of Representatives killed the impeachment case against Ms Arroyo last September. No effort has so far been made to set up the truth commission.

Evasion and obstruction

Sunday's CBCP statement recommended that the search for truth in the wiretapping controversy be "pursued relentlessly," noting that last year's effort was marked by "evasion and obstruction."

In Manila on Monday, Bishop Teodoro Bacani said the CBCP's latest pastoral statement was clearly prompted by the failed impeachment case against Ms Arroyo and Garcillano's recent testimony before a joint House inquiry into the wiretapping scandal.

In his three appearances during the House inquiry, Garcillano

denied allegations he conspired with the President to rig the 2004 election. He also said he could not identify the voice caught in the tape. He admitted he did not think anyone believed his testimony.

The impeachment case and the Garcillano testimony were not yet present when the CBCP came up with its first statement on the crisis last July, Bacani said.

"Before we did this new statement," Lagdameo said, "we first talked among ourselves and had a national consultation. We got the minds of all bishops."

Addressed to GMA

Lagdameo said prelates were so involved in last week's discussions that he recorded 137 interventions—the number of times a bishop spoke on a specific issue—while they were deliberating on the pastoral letter.

"We examined the document, line by line, so bishops could put their specific concerns," he said.

Bacani said that some bishops pushed for the inclusion of the impeachment issue in the statement to indicate strongly that it was specifically addressed to the President.

Impeachment

"Before, it was not there," he recalled. "But we thought that without it, it would seem that the President was not covered by the statement. So we included the word 'impeachment' to make things clear."

Bacani said what came out was a pastoral statement unmistakably attacking Ms Arroyo.

"Now, more evidence surfaced that there really was cheating during the last elections," Bacani said. "What we just don't exactly know is how big the cheating was, but it was indeed big. Things are clearer now to the bishops."

"We just didn't name Gloria but on many items, it was clear that she's the one being referred to," Bacani said, noting the "acts of

Makati Business Club

By Ronald W. Domingo

THE MAKATI BUSINESS CLUB reiterated its stand that political instability and uncertainties should be resolved first before the country could plunge into far-reaching reforms like adopting the parliamentary system.

Guillermo Luz, MBC executive director, said in an interview changes in the Charter should be done after an election or after the resignation of Ms Arroyo.

"Our lives would not change overnight even if we instituted changes in the (basic law) when these changes are practiced with the same people, the

same party and the same electoral system," he said.

Luz said the most crucial issue was addressing the unresolved wiretapping controversy.

He added that MBC was against scrapping the election in 2007 as well as making changes to the Constitution through a constituent assembly as Malacañang had proposed.

Luz said the MBC had not changed its position of asking the President to resign.

"Political instability and uncertainties remain on the top of the mind of the business community," he said.

Joseph Estrada's appeal to the CBCP to intervene in the plunder case against him. He said he thought the issue "was not that pressing."

Also glossed over during the CBCP plenary was a similar plea for intervention by the imprisoned Oakwood mutineers.

VAT sparks buying frenzy for cars, condos, plasma TVs

From page A1

their purchases to get a discount," said Lim who runs Automatic Center and Blim's Fine Furniture.

In consumer electronics, Lim said buyers were loading up not only on giant plasma TVs, one of the best selling items last year, but also on hi-fidelity audio-video equipment, air conditioners, refrigerators and even electric fans.

Cash payment only

"Buyers are getting more price conscious these days and we saw these not only in our high-end

branches but also in our low-end markets," Lim said.

The "panic buying" was also evident in real estate and automobiles in which a 2-percent discount would translate to a discount of between five and six figures.

But buyers must pay in cash to dodge the increase in the VAT rate.

Robinson's Land and Federal Land both noted a spike in condominium sales particularly during the last week of January.

The country's leading automotive assemblers saw an unusual

queue of buyers in what is a traditionally slow month.

200 cars in a month

Honda Cars Philippines Inc. reported that it sold 200 units from Jan. 30 to 31 when Malacañang had erased all doubts that it would push through with the VAT rate increase.

The country's leading assembler, Toyota Motor Philippines Corp., did not give exact figures but its dealers nationwide reported a "rush of customers" starting Jan. 27.

Mitsubishi Motors Corp., however, said there was an increase in

both fleet and individual buyers but there was "no big rush."

Lim said consumers were also bracing for an inevitable change in price tags in the coming days as manufacturers quote higher prices for their goods.

"Retailers are waiting for each other to charge higher prices because nobody wants to make the first move," he said.

At Abensons, a chain of stores selling appliances, prices for plasma TVs did not go up yesterday because of the higher VAT rate.

The retail price of a 42-inch plasma TV ranges from P159,000 to P200,000, while a 50-inch

plasma TV costs between P300,000 and P350,000.

Protest rallies

The implementation of the 12-percent VAT yesterday triggered protest rallies.

Policemen arrested nine protesters who tried to break through a police barricade during simultaneous rallies in Manila.

Police arrested members of the militant group Akbayan near Gate 7 of the Malacañang Palace and on Morayta Street in Sampaloc.

More than a hundred members of militant groups, including Sankakas, Freedom from Debt Coalition and Akbayan, held simultaneous rallies to protest the implementation of the 12-percent VAT.

Injuries

A small group of demonstrators staged a lightning rally at the Plaza Miranda.

Supt. Arturo Paglinawan, chief of the Manila Police District-General Assignment Section, said some of those arrested suffered minor injuries during the dispersal.

Scores of policemen were also hurt as some members of the militant groups were armed with stones. With a report from Tina G. Santos

Town mates rush to defend Faeldon's girl

From page A1

the help she generously extended to her village and were praying that she would prevail over the controversy.

Moved to holding center

Candelaria, who had been detained at the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces in Camp Aguinaldo since Jan. 27 when she was arrested with Faeldon, had been transferred to the camp's holding center.

The center is intended for officers on "floating status" or those under investigation.

Brig. Gen. Marlu Quevedo, chief of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (Isafp), explained the transfer was ordered by AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Generoso Sengga.

Santiago said Lala was instrumental in lighting the entire Sitio Baluarte, located

about 1.5 km from the town proper.

She said her sister asked Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago, her teacher at the University of Santo Tomas College of Law, to fund the electrification of her sitio, which has a population of 30 households.

Clean and green

The senator granted Lala's request and used her Priority Development Assistance Fund to purchase the electrical materials and posts.

Santiago said Lala used to raise funds for the cash prizes for "clean and green" contest in Barangay Maralag.

She said her sister solicited money from her colleagues in the law firm that she earlier worked with to come up with P10,000 to P20,000 in cash prizes for the contest.

Lala had also opened her doors

to those who sought legal advice from her, said Leonor in a separate interview. Santiago said Lala was a preacher of the Christian group Born Again in Barangay Maralag.

Mother doesn't know

Lala is the fifth of the six children of Jesus Rivas and Precevenia Rivas, a housewife. Jesus died five years ago.

Santiago said she and her siblings had not told their mother, Precevenia, 68, about what happened to Lala because she's in poor health.

All that their mother knows, she added, was that Lala was connected with the military.

Santiago said she planned to go to Manila to check on her sister and to know what really happened. She added that she was not aware that Lala had a boyfriend, and even suitors.

Santiago, 32, said her sister

graduated valedictorian at the Balit Elementary School and Balit National High School.

Lala was a scholar at UST in Manila where she took up Bachelor of Science in Commerce. It was also in UST where she got her law degree.

She passed the bar in 2002. Lala went into private law practice for three years before she worked at the Jago.

Lovers?

Faeldon escaped from his military escorts last Dec. 14 while attending the coup d'état case filed in the Makati Regional Trial Court for allegedly being one of six leaders in the mutiny staged at the Oakwood serviced hotel in Makati in July 2003.

After more than a month in hiding, the military agents arrested Faeldon with Rivas, one of the military prosecutors in

the mutineers general court-martial.

Military officials claimed that the two were lovers. But Faeldon denied the relationship, saying the romantic angle was being played up to downplay the support he was allegedly getting from his brothers in arms.

Building house

Rivas' last visit home in Sitio Baluarte was last Dec. 16 to check on the small house that she was constructing.

But she only stayed for two days and left without spending Christmas with her family because she had pressing matters to attend to in Manila, said Santiago.

The elder sister said Lala's house estimated to cost about P200,000. The construction started early last year but it could not be completed immediately due to lack of funds.

Santiago explained Lala used whatever was left of her pay to fund the construction of her house. If her sister ran out of money, she added, the carpenters stopped working on the house and would continue when the money had arrived.

Two weeks ago, Santiago said she received a text message from her sister to ask about the construction of her house.

They had not talked since then.

Innocent until ...

"Captain Rivas has not been charged. She is innocent until proven otherwise," Quevedo said to explain the transfer of the military prosecutor.

Quevedo also said he ordered Isafp personnel to stop issuing comments on the alleged romance between Rivas and Faeldon.

With a report from Fe Zamora

Noli sued by former staff for illegal dismissal

From page A1

drivers and a production assistant yesterday lodged a complaint against De Castro and his wife Ariene, Allan Sinsuat and Ariel Nepomuceno—all Bayan Productions incorporators—for allegedly committing every unfair practice in the labor code.

"Give us justice. That's all we ask. Kabayan is not pro-poor, as he portrays himself to be. His public image is a product of television," said one complainant, writer Joseph Hernal.

Labor arbiter Virgilio Azarraga set the preliminary hearings on Feb. 22 and 27.

Among the grounds cited in the complaint filed with the National Labor Relations Commission was that De Castro et al. abandoned the complainants without giving them severance pay after the ABS-CBN network pulled the long-running weekly show off the air last Dec. 31.

The specific charges filed were "constructive" illegal dismissal, illegal suspension, illegal layoff and (non)regularization, underpayment and/or nonpayment of benefits, and unfair labor practice.

P100 million

But in an interview with the Inquirer, De Castro said all employees of Bayan Productions, including himself, were just "talents" in MGB. Thus, he said, there really was no employer-employee relationship.

He also said that the status of the show's talents had been known to them since the program was first aired, and that in 2003, Bayan Productions even distributed a "manual for talents" in the show to explain their relationship with ABS-CBN.

Maria Nympha Mandagan, lawyer for the complainants, said the unpaid employees' benefits for the last 18 years were estimated at P100 million.

The amount supposedly represents the underpayment or non-payment of salaries, overtime pay (including night differential), medical benefits, holiday pay, premium for holiday pay and rest day, service incentive leave, 13th-month pay, separation pay and retirement benefits.

According to the complainants, the Lopezes, owners of ABS-CBN, had nothing to do with the filing of the labor case. They pointed out that network owners Luisito Alejandro, Philbert Berba and Eugenio Lopez III had been named co-respondents.

Regarding the figure quoted by the complainants' lawyer, he said: "Bayan Productions is not even making that much. So how could they have earned P100 million?"

De Castro insisted that Bayan Productions had paid all its talents on time, and dutifully remitted their contributions to the Social Security System.

"I was a talent there until I left when I became Vice President," he said. "Maybe what they were refer-

ring to was their talent fee for December, which was when the show was cancelled. But that fee has always come from ABS-CBN, which will still give them the money. The network can withhold their salary. Perhaps they just need certain papers to get it."

De Castro stressed that the bonuses and other benefits received by MGB talents had come from Bayan Productions, which is headed by his wife Arlene.

"I give my own money each Christmas because they are not entitled to a bonus," he said, adding that many of the talents owed him and his family money used for tuition and medical expenses.

Left hanging

Hernal, who had been with "Magandang Gabi, Bayan" since 1997, told the Inquirer that the show's employees had been barred from working in any of the shows of the network, and that he and his colleagues had nowhere to go.

"We were left hanging, so we decided to file the case to get what is due us," Hernal said, adding:

"We can't believe that this can happen to us. We thought he

US to bankroll peace with Moro rebels

WASHINGTON—THE UNITED States says it will provide funds to re-integrate rebels from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front if it signs a peace accord to end a three-decade long revolt.

The Philippine government could sign the peace treaty with the MILF as early as this year, ending a rebellion waged since 1978 by Moro rebels.

Washington had provided economic aid to a program that helped re-integrate former combatants of another large Muslim separatist group, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), which signed a peace treaty with Manila in 1996.

The United States hopes "to offer a similar program if another major Muslim insurgent group signs a peace accord with the Philippine government," said Kristie Kenney, President George W. Bush's nomi-

nee to be the new US ambassador to Manila.

Kenney, speaking at her confirmation hearing before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on Tuesday, was referring to the 12,000-strong separatist group MILF that signed a ceasefire with the government in 2003.

She did not provide details of the prospective funding.

Malaysia is hosting peace talks between the administration of Philippine President Gloria Arroyo and the MILF leadership.

A Philippine negotiating panel is expected to fly to Kuala Lumpur shortly to resume talks that began about two years ago with the ceasefire signing.

The MILF has also promised to help flush out foreign Islamic militants believed hiding in Mindanao, where it has been fighting for an in-

dependent state. The militants are believed to be linked to the Jemaah Islamiyah extremist network, which reportedly is the Southeast Asian chapter of the al-Qaeda terror network.

Kenney, the former US Ambassador to Ecuador and who had previously held senior positions at the State Department and National Security Council in Washington, said she wanted to enhance US ties with the Philippines, including in cooperation in the US-led "war on terror."

The United States currently trains Philippine troops battling the Abu Sayyaf kidnap-for-ransom group, another al-Qaeda linked organization which operates in the southern tip of the archipelago.

Bilateral relations took a hit recently over a tug-of-war on the custody of four US Marines accused of involvement in a rape of a 22-year-

old Filipino woman.

Washington rejected a request by Manila to hand over the soldiers, citing a treaty allowing for US custody until the case was concluded.

But a group of Philippine lawmakers called for the scrapping of the treaty that they said gives visiting US servicemen undue protection when they commit crimes in the Philippines.

The United States is the largest investor in the Philippines and top trading partner. More than 125,000 US citizens reside in the Philippines while about two million Filipino-Americans live in the United States.

"I believe our historic relationship with the Philippines will continue to flourish as we pursue our common vision of peace, stability, and prosperity," Kenney told the Senate hearing.

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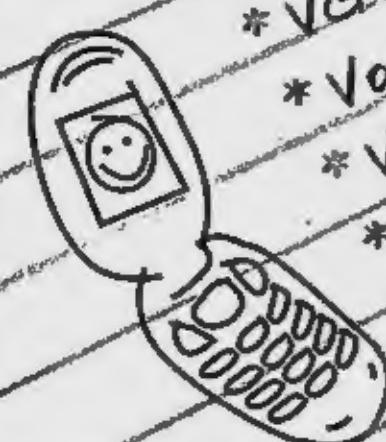
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UP study finds toxic heavy metals near Lafayette mine

From page A1

Lafayette was fined. There were also heavy metals which the Department of Environment and Natural Resources should also look into," said Januar Ong, CEC's head of the research project.

The DENR fined Lafayette P10.7 million in January for the spillage of mine tailings on Rapu-Rapu Island last Oct. 11 and Oct. 31.

Unreliable study

Lafayette said it was not using mercury in its operations.

"We do not have a copy of the so-called UP study this unknown militant group is using but we are confident we can challenge these findings using an independent third party. At best, this study is unreliable and unscientific," Lafayette said in a statement.

Results of the tests have sparked concerns that mining on the island has released naturally occurring heavy metals into the soil, air and water. Heavy metals are not used in the processing of mineral ore at Rapu-Rapu.

A sediment sample near one of the spill sites was found to contain mercury at 0.999 part per million (ppm), exceeding the government's industrial waste standard of 0.20 ppm.

"We should not be concerned about whether they meet the standard or not. Lafayette is not supposed to release toxic metals into the air or water," Ong said at a press conference.

Lafayette said samples of Rapu-Rapu water taken on Jan. 6 and

19 passed the government's strict cyanide standards. "This is why the dates the samples were taken are very critical here," it said.

Third party analysis

Lafayette also said that the UP National Science Research Institute (NSRI) was examining water samples taken in Rapu-Rapu only on Jan. 26.

"The UP team was with scientists from the Department of Science and Technology, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources and representatives from 40 groups representing Sorsogon and Albay organizations. The water samples were split with Lafayette which will have another third party do a parallel analysis," Lafayette said.

It said the impending UP NSRI findings would be the most reliable source of information on this matter.

"Since a new management took over Lafayette about two weeks ago, its focus has been at least full compliance with all the rules and requirements to ensure responsible and sustainable mining operations and the protection of the environment and the host communities," the company said.

CBCP's call

The release of the CEC study followed calls by the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) for a repeal of the Mining Act of 1995, which allows foreign companies to exploit the country's resources through large-scale mining operations.

In a pastoral statement released on Sunday, the CBCP

urged the President to recall all approved mining concessions and disapprove pending applications for mining projects.

The bishops said the Mining Act of 1995 "threatens people's health and environmental safety through the wanton dumping of waste and tailings in rivers and seas."

They also said that communities affected by mining were increasingly subjected to human rights violations.

Remain firm

The CEC has backed the bishops' request for President Macapagal-Arroyo to overturn the

Mining Act of 1995 and told the CBCP to remain united in ending large-scale mining in the Philippines.

"We're calling for the CBCP to remain firm in its decision because we know there are pressures from Malacañang," said Trizie Concepcion, spokesperson for environmental activist alliance Defend Patromyo.

A group of activist-scientists said the mining law would not lead to industrialization.

"The Mining Act does not seek to develop local downstream industries that will enable the country to process raw mineral ores into finished products.

Rather, it seeks to relegate the country into a mere provider of raw materials for the international markets," said Agham secretary general Trizie Concepcion.

She said the law would increase environmental destruction and accelerate poverty in the countryside.

Assurance

The CBCP statement has prompted a mining company to assure the public that it was committed to protecting the rights of local communities and indigenous people in Tampakan Copper-Gold Project in South Cotabato.

"Since SMI took over the project in 2002, it has undertaken numerous significant environmental and community development activities in the project area," Paul Dominguez, president of Sagittarius Mines Inc., said.

Dominguez said the company was proud of its record in maintaining its environmental, safety, and social programs.

"SMI has a standing policy to arrange briefings and visits for concerned sectors to see for themselves the measures that we have taken to ensure sustainable development for the project," he said. Reports from David A. Hayes and Christine Gaylcan

Fertilizer fund traced to solon's foundation

From page A1

Per SEC records, its president, Wilfredo Camomot, was Yapha's speechwriter, who died of cardiac arrest on Aug. 23, 2004.

The other incorporators—Ofelio Puno, Abundio Elle and Monico Baron—are either related to or working for Yapha.

When the Inquirer dialed the number, it turned out to be the phone of Yapha's clinic district office at the Visayas Community Medical Center on Osmeña Boulevard, Cebu City.

The woman who answered the phone was Nida Ordeniza, who said she was Yapha's secretary.

Asked if she was connected with the Kasosyo Foundation, Ordeniza said she had no knowledge of it. But when the Inquirer mentioned Camomot's name, she became evasive and said she could not answer questions because she was eating.

The Inquirer called again about 30 minutes later, but a male staff member said Ordeniza had left.

According to Naring Capa, a cashier of the Yapha-owned bus company Jegans Liner, Puno is a relative of the lawmaker and also works as a cashier at Jegans.

Elle is in charge of the maintenance of the tires of the company buses, and Baron is the driver of Yapha's son, Pinamungahan Mayor Jeffrey Yapha, Capa said.

No rice farms in district

On Tuesday in Manila, DA officials admitted at the Senate budget hearing that the districts of three Cebu administration lawmakers were among the beneficiaries of the P544 million in recovered Marcos money originally intended for the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program.

The fund was released purportedly to en-

sure President Macapagal-Arroyo's victory in the 2004 election.

Yapha yesterday confirmed that Camomot was his close friend and speechwriter. But he disclaimed knowledge that the latter had formed a foundation or used his office as its address.

He said he did not know why his employees were included in the list of incorporators: "I don't know anything about that. They decided [to form the foundation] on their own."

Yapha said that his conscience was clear, and that there was no irregularity in the implementation of the project.

Asked why he received the money when there were no rice farms in his district, Yapha said the fertilizer was made available not just to rice farmers but also to those planting corn and other crops.

He said he did not even know the fund existed until DA regional director Eduardo Lecciones phoned him shortly before the 2004 elections to tell him about the appropriation.

Yapha said Lecciones phoned him again days after the elections to tell him that his P3-million share of the fund had arrived and that it would be used to buy fertilizer.

He said he told Lecciones to coordinate with his office in distributing the fertilizer to the farmers in his district.

He claimed not to know who the recipients were because it was Lecciones who had the list of beneficiaries.

Lecciones himself said there was nothing irregular in his course of the fertilizer fund through Kasosyo. He said it had the "track record" and had complied with all requirements as a DA-accredited project implementer.

According to Lecciones, Kasosyo has been implementing DA projects since 2003.

He said the beneficiaries were engaged in crop farming.

disbursement of the P544-million fund and the P1.102-billion fund (GMA Rice and Corn Livestock Programs)," Sen. Ramon Magsaysay Jr. said.

He said Senate President Franklin Drilon and Sen. Sergio Osmeña III wanted to dig deeper into the management of the DA funds outside of the P728-million fund, all released before the May 2004 elections.

Some "surprise witnesses," including an elected official, are expected to appear at the 10 a.m. hearing today of the committee on agriculture on the alleged mismanagement of the P728-million fertilizer fund.

"We'll have material witnesses who will let us know how the process of the transactions on fertilizer fund was done and how the funds were disposed of," Magsaysay, chair of the investigating committee, told reporters.

"[It] will be one of the more important hearings despite the fact that Mr. Bolante is not coming, but there are few surprise witnesses," Magsaysay said.

He was referring to former Agriculture Undersecretary Jocelyn "Tocjoc" Bolante, the alleged chief architect of the P728-million fertilizer fund program, who had been cited in contempt and ordered arrested in December for snubbing the hearings.

Non-CARP farmers

Also yesterday, the Inquirer obtained a copy of a DA report (for the dry season cropping from November 2004 to April 2005) showing that most (80 percent) of the beneficiaries of the P544 million used for the Gimintuang Masaganang Ani hybrid rice program were nonagrarian reform farmers.

Of the 130,079 farmers who availed themselves of the seeds distributed under the program, 104,795 were nonagrarian reform beneficiaries and the rest, agrarian reform beneficiaries.

And of the number of bags of seeds distributed, 170,581 went to nonagrarian reform beneficiaries, and 43,943 to agrarian reform beneficiaries.

The biggest number of nonagrarian reform farmer-beneficiaries was in Regions II (23,183) and III (21,354), while the biggest number of agrarian reform farmer-beneficiaries was in Region II (10,959) and the Cordillera Administrative Region (4,242), according to the report.

Frisco Malabanan, GMA hybrid rice program director, on Tuesday confirmed to Drilon that the majority of the beneficiaries of the P544 million were nonagrarian reform beneficiaries.

The inclusion of the nonagrarian reform farmers as beneficiaries could be a violation of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law, Drilon said.

Bounty for Bolante

Magsaysay said that from P20,000 in seed money, the reward he had put up for the immediate arrest of Bolante reached the P100,000 mark at noon yesterday.

"It shows the pent-up frustration and passion of Filipinos to arrive at the truth. And this becomes the vehicle," he said.

Magsaysay's committee served a new subpoena on Agriculture Undersecretary Belinda Gonzales, Assistant Secretary Felix Jose Montes and former Assistant Secretary Ibarra Poloquit, among others, for today's hearing.

Kasosyo-distributed
As for the share of Rep. Antonio Cuenco, farmers in at least 14 mountain villages in Cebu City received the fertilizer, Lecciones said.

He said the fertilizer meant for Cuenco's district was also distributed by Kasosyo, but Cuenco yesterday denied knowledge of it.

Lecciones, however, insisted he had told Cuenco about the arrangement with Kasosyo.

Rep. Simeon Kintanar, on the other hand, admitted that P3 million was appropriated for his district but that only 60 percent (equivalent to almost P2 million) was released.

Kintanar said the money went directly to the Office of Mayor Wilfredo Caminero of Argao town.

He said Caminero handled the procurement of Grandeur fertilizer because farmers supposedly did not know how to use liquid fertilizer.

Kintanar said he was informed about the fertilizer fund prior to the elections but did not receive it until after the polls.

Surprise witnesses

In Manila, the Senate sees a more extensive investigation of the misuse of some P2.8 billion in DA funds even as the committee on agriculture resumes today its inquiry into the P728-million fertilizer fund scam.

"The investigation will spill over into the

300 camp out at Manny's gate waiting for 'balato'

From page A1

boxer Erik Morales earned him a huge prize money.

For three days, about 300 people, some of them coming from as far as Lanao del Sur and Zamboanga del Sur, have stayed outside Pacquiao's house in Barangay Labangal.

They said they would only go home if Pacquiao showed up.

To ensure they would not miss any tip once Pacquiao shows up, the fans are conducting night vigils.

As of yesterday, the country's boxing sensation has granted the requests of his fans.

It could not be confirmed where Pacquiao has been staying since his return from the United States.

Pacquiao's mother, Dionisia, spoke over a local radio station and asked for understanding.

She said it was true that his son made some money from the fight and from the live telecast on a pay-per-view channel. But Manny, she said, "has yet to receive anything."

"He even borrowed money from his manager. You should understand that it is not easy to bring home such amount," Dionisia said.

Estimates of Pacquiao's actual net income from his bout with Morales vary.

Some say he became \$2 million richer from the prize money alone, but others claim it would actually be little over \$300,000 after taxes and other deductions.

Dionisia said her son was always ready to share his blessings.

Former boxing champion Rolando Navarrete got P1,000 when he patiently trailed the float carrying Pacquiao during a rousing welcome ceremony for the latter last week.

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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Iran threatens to stop UN nuke inspections

TEHRAN—THE CRISIS OVER IRAN'S NUCLEAR AMBITIONS deepened Tuesday as Tehran signaled it would end cooperation with the UN nuclear watchdog at the weekend and the United States warned of a miscalculation.

Iran will cease cooperating with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) watchdog on Saturday if it refers the country's nuclear dossier to the UN Security Council, Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said.

"There is no difference between informing the Security Council and referring (the case) to it," Mottaki said.

"In either case, if the dossier is sent to the Security Council, Iran will cease voluntary cooperation (with the IAEA) from Saturday Feb. 4."

Any such step would be an "additional miscalculation" that would isolate Iran further in the international community, US Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns told reporters, a day after the five permanent members of the UN Security Council agreed to report Iran to the body over its nuclear program.

"It's extraordinary that a country under the international spotlight responds to a united call from the P-5 (permanent five UN Security Council members) for diplomacy they would respond by these

further unilateral actions. It would be another miscalculation."

The diplomat said he was buoyed by the united front put forward by Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States on the issue, saying it paved the way for a "resounding vote" at the IAEA board of governors' next meeting later this week.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said she was satisfied with the agreement reached in London Monday night on referring the Iran dossier to the Security Council, though no action would be taken before March when IAEA Director General Mohammed El-Baradei is due to report on Tehran's compliance with its obligations.

She said the deal did not mean the end of differences between China and Russia on the one hand and the West on the other.

"I don't underestimate the difficulty of maintaining a consensus as we go into this process," she said on board the plane taking her from London to Washington.

"I expect there is going to continue

to be tactical differences about timing, there will be tactical differences about precisely what is required. But that is the hard work of diplomacy."

In Tehran Mottaki reiterated Iran's insistence that it would carry on with its renewed nuclear research.

"We have told everyone with whom we have discussed this that there is no question of our re-suspending our nuclear research activities. That is irreversible. It must be stated that nuclear research is different than industrial production of combustible material."

Mottaki said that any decision to involve the Security Council could affect the "Russian plan," under which Iran is being urged to agree to conduct any enrichment activities in Russia.

"Neither the United States nor any other power can oblige other countries to accept just anything under threat," he added.

The Iranian government has handed over to the IAEA a document whose only use would be in making nuclear weapons parts, the IAEA said in a confidential report obtained Tuesday by AFP

APP

S. Korea widens criminal probe of tainted scientists

SEOUL—SOUTH KOREAN PROSECUTORS have widened their criminal probe of a team led by a disgraced scientist to see if a bioethics law was breached by illegally purchasing human eggs, a prosecution source said on Wednesday.

Prosecutors have already launched a criminal probe of the team led by Hwang Woo-suk on suspicion of fraudulently using state funds.

Hwang's team intentionally fabricated key data in two landmark papers on human embryonic stem cells that have since been debunked, a Seoul National University panel said.

Bioethics law

Hwang's research had raised hopes because it seemed to hasten the day when genetically specific tissue could be grown from embryonic stem cells to repair damaged organs or treat diseases such as Parkinson's.

"We will focus on the team's acquisition of ova after the life science ethics law took effect in 2005," the prosecution source, who declined to be named, said by telephone.

South Korea enacted a bioethics law in January 2005 aimed at raising ethical standards in stem cell research and ensuring the country's research met global practices.

The law allows for therapeutic cloning for embryonic stem cell research, but bans human cloning. It prohibits the commercial trade in ova or sperm, providing punishment of up to three years in jail for brokers and up to two years for donors.

Fraudulently using state funds can carry a jail term of up to 10 years.

Hwang was once hailed as a hero in South Korea, but trouble started to mount for him last November when media reports circulated saying junior researchers had given their own human eggs for his team's research.

Unethical

Donations of this type by research associates are considered unethical because of the possibility of coercion.

Hwang at first said he did not know of the donations but later admitted he was aware of them.

The university investigation panel said that Hwang actually accompanied one of the research associates himself to the hospital for a donation.

The investigation panel also said Hwang's team used more human ova than they had claimed in their research.

It said women were paid for their donations, which would not necessarily have been illegal if the payments took place before the 2005 bioethics law was enacted.

South Korean auditors questioned Hwang last Friday as part of a separate investigation into whether his team misused state funds.

The team got 41.7 billion won (\$43.41 million) in state funds from 1995 to 2005, the Board of Audit and Inspection said.

South Korean media said prosecutors may question Hwang some time this month as part of their probe.

Prosecutors have said they are also looking into Hwang's claims he was the victim of a conspiracy to discredit him.

At a news conference last month, Hwang apologized for the fraud in the papers, but laid the blame for the fabrications at the feet of junior researchers in his team. **Reuters**

New planet is bigger than Pluto, says study

PARIS—FOR MORE THAN SEVEN decades, schoolchildren have been taught that tiny, lonely Pluto is the outermost of the nine planets that orbit the Sun.

A big hole has now been bashed into that cherished piece of learning, for astronomers have determined that Pluto is much smaller than an enigmatic object, 2003 UB313, whose discoverers claim is the solar system's 10th planet.

UB313, found some 15 billion km from Earth, ignited a huge row after its finding was announced last July 30 by an American team.

Pluto's defenders blasted UB313, saying it was not a planet ... but a vulgar rock.

The polite term for such abuse is a KBO—Kuiper Belt Object—for the estimated 100,000 pieces of icy, primeval debris that slowly encircle the Sun on the outskirts of the Solar System, far beyond the orbit of Neptune.

The UB313 supporters' club responded tartly, claiming that if anything deserved the moniker of KBO, it was Pluto.

For one thing, Pluto, discovered in 1930 by American Clyde Tombaugh, has a weird, unplane-

tary orbital plane. It is a whole 17 degrees off the horizontal plane taken by the eight other planets.

In addition, its path around the Sun is so egg-shaped that, for 20 years of its 248-year orbit, is inside the track of Neptune itself.

Now, weighing powerfully in this group's favor, are the first detailed measurements of UB313's size.

If the data are accepted by a special 19-member panel set up by the International Astronomical Union (IAU) to determine what constitutes a planet, Pluto faces being booted out of the solar system's elite club, and downgraded to a mere KBO.

Either that, or the planetary list will have to expand to include UB313 and possibly many others.

In a study published on Thursday in Nature, astronomers led by Frank Bertoldi of the University of Bonn in Germany say they have measured reflected solar radiation from UB313, using a 30-meter telescope in Spain, to get a yardstick of its size.

The result: UB313 has a diameter of about 3,000 km, which would make it the largest solar system object to be spotted since the discovery of Neptune in 1846. **AFP**

Moscow ready to work with all-Hamas gov't

MOSCOW—RUSSIA IS READY TO WORK with the new leadership of the Palestinian Authority, even if it is made up exclusively of Hamas, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Tuesday, according to the Interfax news agency.

Lavrov, who was in London for international talks over the Iranian nuclear threat and the situation in the Middle East, said Russia would not reject the new Palestinian leadership, whatever it is.

"We do not reject relations with the new Palestinian leadership, whether it is with the parliament or with the government that the parliament forms," he said.

"It is very likely that there will be some sort of coalition," said Lavrov. "But we cannot exclude the possibility of an all-Hamas government."

Russian President Vladimir Putin said earlier Tuesday that the international community should continue to help the Palestinians in spite of Hamas' win in last week's legislative elections.

Putin also stressed that Russia's position on Hamas differed from that taken by the United States and the European Union.

"Our foreign ministry has never described Hamas as a terrorist organization," he said. This difference however did not mean that Hamas could expect Russia's unqualified support.

"Hamas must leave its radical declarations, must recognize Israel's right to exist and normalize contact with the international community," the Russian leader said.

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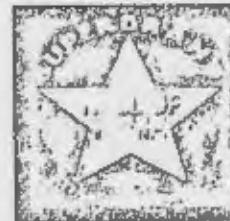
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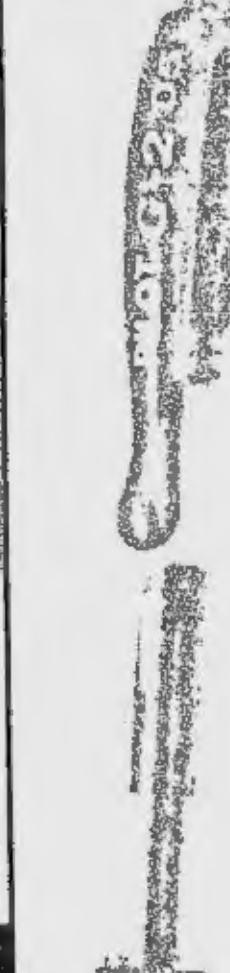
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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2006

The WORLD

Afghans win aid, military pledges

cuts its troop levels. Britain announced last week it would send an additional 3,300 troops.

But one of the major challenges for Afghanistan will be to crack down on the opium trade, which accounts for about half of the country's economy.

Afghanistan is the world's biggest source of illicit opium.

It's refined heroin accounts for about 87 percent of global supply and many farmers depend on revenue from the drug.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai said his people had turned to growing opium poppies during three decades of desperation and it would take years to eradicate the trade.

"Let us recognize that this is a tough fight," he said. "Afghanistan will need at least 10 years of strong, systematic consistent effort in eradication, in law enforcement and in the provision to the Afghan farmers of an alternative economy." One former Afghan minister said billions of dollars of aid that have poured into the country have done little to improve people's lives, and that sweeping personnel changes in government and aid agencies were needed.

卷之三十一

Alito sworn in as newest justice

The Republican-dominated Senate earlier Tuesday confirmed conservative judge Alito by a near party-line 58 to 42 vote.

Also took the oath in
taken the seat vacated by departing Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, who was the first woman ever seated on the court.

Alito took the oath in a brief ceremony at the Supreme Court, just hours before the president was to deliver his annual State of the Union speech in Congress, which the new justice was to attend. A White House ceremony in Alito's honor is to take place Wednesday, at which he to take his oath a second time.

A black and white portrait of Justice Samuel Alito. He is wearing glasses and a dark suit, looking slightly to the right with a neutral expression.

Bush on Tuesday said he was "pleased" by the Senate's endorsement of Auto, whom he described as a "brilliant and fair-minded judge." "He is a man of deep character and integrity and he will make all Americans proud as a justice on our highest court," Bush said.

Although he cleared his confirmation vote by a comfortable margin, Alito garnered fewer votes than any Supreme Court justice since Clarence Thomas. Thomas was confirmed in 1991. Despite the lack of bipartisan support for Alito, Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist hailed the confirmation as a major triumph for Bush.

WORLDBRIEFS

Saddam trial boycott

AMMAN—The chief lawyer in the case of Kuwaiti top representing former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein said on Wednesday that the defense will not appear in court until newly selected chief judge Raouf Abdul Rahman resigns. "We cannot attend any trial session unless the chief judge resigns because he holds a personal grudge against my client," Saddam's chief lawyer Khalil Dulaimi told Reuters on Wednesday. The lawyer said the Kurdish judge could not be impartial because he'd been sentenced twice in absentia by courts under Saddam's rule and was a member of an opposition Kurdish nationalist party. **Reuters**

Indonesia ferry sinks

JAKARTA—An Indonesian ferry carrying 105 people sank in heavy seas in the country's east overnight and naval vessels were searching for survivors, port officials said on Wednesday. A naval vessel had so far rescued 12 people. El Shinta radio said. There were 82 passengers and 23 crew on board the doomed vessel, officials said. The ferry was travelling from Kupang on Indonesia's side of Timor Island to nearby Rota Island when officials lost contact with it on Tuesday night, officials said. "We can confirm that the ferry has sunk. The weather is pretty friendly right now and rescue crews are doing their job," one Kupang port official, Marthen Manu, told Reuters by telephone.

\$485-M bank scam in China

WASHINGTON—US authorities have charged two former Bank of China managers over the theft of more than \$485 million which they tried to launder through Las Vegas casinos, officials said Tuesday. Xu Chaofan and Xu Guojun with their wives and one other relative have been charged with racketeering, money laundering and fraud by a federal grand jury in Las Vegas, the Justice Department said. Bank of China is a major state-controlled Chinese commercial bank. The theft has been under investigation by authorities in the United States, Hong Kong, China and Canada for more than two years. The charges said the two managers, with an another executive, moved stolen money through Hong Kong, Canada and the US before settling in the US using sham marriages. The six were detained in October 2004.

Blast kills 8 Iraqi laborers

BAGHDAD—A bomb exploded alongside a group of Iraqi men waiting for work in eastern Baghdad on Wednesday, killing at least eight and wounding more than 50, police officials said. Col. Ahmed Abboud, chief of police in the New Baghdad area where the explosion happened, cited eyewitnesses saying a man placed a bag full of explosives near a cart that sold tea to the workers. "The people did not suspect him when he first came with the bag because all workers carry their food in bags," Abboud told AP.



• Júlio C. Oliveira • R. B. Góes
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Mission impossible

THREE COULD BE NO BETTER PROOF OF THE sheer futility of the new assignment President Macapagal-Arroyo gave to former Chief Justice Hilario Davide than the adamant refusal of Chair Benjamin Abalos and other members of the Commission on Elections to leave their posts. Abalos told the INQUIRER Monday he and four commissioners would not resign because it would make them look guilty.

EDITORIAL He was reacting to fresh calls for their resignation made by the country's Catholic bishops.

In a pastoral statement issued Sunday, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines underscored the need to restore "confidence and trust in our political processes" in the face of "a crisis of moral values, a crisis of truth and justice" arising from allegations that the Arroyo administration had rigged the 2004 elections. The first step, the bishops said, is to undertake electoral reforms so that the Comelec can be transformed into a "competent and reliable body beyond reproach." And they added: "The call for the resignation or even prosecution of a number of commissioners should not be lightly brushed aside."

That makes the CBCP the third major institution to urge not only the resignation but the prosecution of top Comelec officials. Two years ago, in January 2004, the Supreme Court voided the P1.3-billion computerization contract between the Comelec and Mega Pacific consortium, saying it had been awarded not only "in clear violation of law and jurisprudence but also in reckless disregard of its [the Comelec's] own bidding rules and procedures." The Court then ordered the Comelec to rescind the contract, and the Office of the Ombudsman to prosecute all the officials involved.

Last December, the Senate blue ribbon committee released a report finding the same contract "egregiously fraudulent." The Senate committee condemned the award of the contract to Mega Pacific as "unparalleled in its brazen and unmitigated transgression of generally accepted norms and conduct of public bidding." In awarding the contract, it said, the election commissioners and members of the Comelec Bids and Awards Committee exhibited "utter irresponsibility" and should therefore "vacate their positions."

Thrice pilloried in public for corruption and incompetence, Abalos and his commissioners continue to cling to their posts. In response to the bishops' recent demand for their resignation, Abalos again sought sanctuary in the glacier-paced investigation being conducted by the Ombudsman. "Yes, there should be an investigation," he said while complaining that "no full-blown trial" was conducted before the Supreme Court voided the contract. He said the Court had rendered its verdict "without an extensive inquiry into the facts."

In other words, Abalos is putting himself above the Supreme Court, free not only to question its decision but to set that decision aside. But if that smacks of defiance, he is simply acting true to form. That is what he has been doing all this time: defying the Court, defying the Senate, defying public opinion which is overwhelmingly disapproving of the Comelec's performance; and now defying Church leaders.

Everyone who has given it a thought (with the possible exception of the President) believes, with the bishops, that the necessary first step toward election reform is the removal of Abalos and company. With all of them remaining on board, no real reform is possible. Getting them out is the first order of business. If three powerful institutions combined with strong public opinion cannot make them relinquish their positions, how can Davide persuade or force them to do so? His new assignment has all the marks of mission impossible.

Another trickster

WITH THE ARREST OF TAKAMU HORIE, PRESIDENT OF doccom sensation Livedoor Co., we find ourselves wondering if the "champion of reform" who led a group with a market value of 1 trillion yen was just another bubble business trickster.

Horie's business strategy was always supported by shady tactics barely within the bounds of law... He had defended such ploys, saying there was nothing wrong with taking advantage of legal loopholes.

However, the allegations suggest otherwise. What he did actually amounts to a grave betrayal of investors' trust.

The scandal has raised many questions that must be examined by society as a whole as well as those for investigators.

Asahi Shimbun (Tokyo)



Newsroom rule

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

In NEWSROOMS, IT'S KNOWN AS THE "SUNSHINE RULE." Editors drum it into cub reporters: "Focus your reports like light—and watch the cockroaches scram."

At the Senate, we saw that rule play out. Sen. Joker Arroyo demanded that the Presidential Commission on Good Government enlighten budget committee members about the secret talks on "a P50-billion settlement with businessman Eduardo Cojuangco" involving the coconut levy.

PCGG Chair Camilo Sabio has a hard-earned reputation for a lifetime of service to the marginalized. But this time, he uncharacteristically opted to scram.

Sabio refused to answer whether President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo approved the negotiations, "The Inquirer reported. "PCGG is answerable only to the President," he said. Neither would he make pertinent documents available to the body from which he's asking a P67-million budget.

What documents? Is there a draft Amicable Settlement Compromise Agreement now circulating? Does the solicitor general have a finger in this cookie jar? There is an OSIG memo on the coco levy saying, the entire Coconut Industry Fund has been invested, "as legally mandated." Really? Or are these talk "a secret in the Oxford sense," as philosopher Oliver Franks once said? "You may tell it to only one person at a time."

Were Sabio's zipped lips just a fit of simple amnesia? In waving Executive Order No. 1, as basis for staying mute, Sabio overlooked the author then executive secretary Joker Arroyo. "My signature is on that," the senator snapped, adding: EO 1 does not muzzle officials at budget hearings.

Did Sabio recall he taught Ateneo Law School students that the Bill of Rights (Section 7) states: "the right of the people to information on matters of public concern shall be recognized"? Dicto for "access to official records"?

An unmistakable mark of democratic society is transparency. Access by citizens to information ensures just governance. "A people without information is a dead people," journalist Rosalina Velasquez

writes. And decay also breeds cockroaches.

Authoritarian regimes, in contrast, gag and stonewall. We saw that with Ferdinand Marcos, Idi Amin, Augusto Pinochet, Robert Mugabe and their ilk. As John put it: "Men preferred darkness to the light because their deeds were evil."

But Sabio is not the first to clam up. Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano wore his gag with aplomb. Military and other officials shoved their agencies into blackout zones. Their pathetic excuse for blinding citizens is President Arroyo's EO 464. It forbids their appearing before congressional probes.

"Deaf and silent, we may be led like lambs to the slaughter," George Washington cautioned his fledgling nation. Thus, the Supreme Court is now hearing challenges to EO 464 for striking a whole bureaucracy mute. And the bitter experience with the coconut levy over the last three decades, shows there is nothing that corrupts more than secrecy.

The coco levy distilled the greed-blinding excesses of the "New Society." Marcos and his coconut czar Eduardo Cojuangco clamped that tax on—from Presidential Decree 276 to EO 828—while shielded by the dictatorship's censors.

The levy enriched the cronies but beggared millions of small farmers. It "devoured the savings of widows and orphans."

There are "more important things," the Book of Accabas says, "than transporting gold to the grave." So 96 religious leaders, men and women—by Ricardo Cardinal Vidal—issued in 1996 an open letter stating:

"Levies were taxes imposed on farmers through abuse of state power. These are public

funds owned by the Filipino people... That P100 billion is now being claimed and controlled by Marcos cronies."

For almost two decades, cronies clung to the loot as their lawyers argued before the courts: the levy was a private kitty, not a tax. "Must we rewrite our dictionaries?" snapped Cebu Daily News (December 2001). "PCGG's Haydee Yorac and Solicitor General Simeon Marcelo have rightly questioned how can the private sector impose a levy? That'd be extortion."

During Chief Justice Hilario Davide's watch, the courts ruled levies were public funds, which have now swollen to over P130 billion. That's bound to whet the predators. Tap-tap sirai sa daikua sun buaya niya, Tausugs say. "There's a crocodile in every big river."

Was the President consulted on the deal? Senator Arroyo asked. No reply. Government had been favored by the Supreme Court decisions, Senator Arroyo pointed out. Wasn't the PCGG snatching defeat from the jaws of victory by lofting settlement bids when it had the upperhand? No reply.

So, the Senate understandably put Sabio's feet to the fire: it scrapped the PCGG's total budget. Still no reply. "No talk, no mistake," the late Sen. Genaro Magaysay said with engaging candor.

The coconut, scientists say, is the "tree of 999 uses." Fruit, trunk, leaves, everything is utilized. But Marcos and his economic buccaneers discovered the coconut's 1,000th use: they diverted its taxes to line their own pockets.

Now, the same pirates salivate for a return of martial law coco levy plunder. And standing against them are Senator Arroyo and like-minded colleagues who, like editors, would apply the "sunshine rule."

President Arroyo's tendency is to choose what most shores up her stay in power. This is less than reassuring. She could sign up with the thieves and find the 1,000th use of the coconut: rewarding those who banished on the poor.

E-mail: juan_mercado@pacific.net.ph

Credible alternative

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros



I AGREE WITH THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS' Conference of the Philippines that we should have a credible alternative before we excise Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. But a credible alternative doesn't have to be a person, it can be a process. That isn't a novel idea, that was the case in Edsa II. If the alternative in Edsa II had been GMA, Edsa II would never have happened. GMA was widely distrusted even then, having balked at fighting Erap until it was safe to do. Then she presented herself as the opposite of Erap. As it turned out, not without prophetic irony, she would be the opposite of Erap in the extent to which she would cling to power. In all else, she would be the likeness of Marcos.

That is the reason I disagreed with Cory when she and she regretted delivering such a spawn as GMA, birthing her in Edsa II. I myself do not regret taking part in Edsa II. I believed in Edsa II; I still do. That was a necessary deed, that was a noble deed. What Cory (and Dinky Soliman and Bill Luz) should regret is not Edsa II, it is helping someone who had shown herself to be so hungry for power she would steal the elections to have it. I had no problems recognizing GMA as my President after Edsa II. However much I criticized her, I owed her my taxes as my President. I have every problem recognizing GMA as my President after the 2004 elections. After that, I owed her only my scorn.

I submit the following perfectly credible alternative in response to the CBCP's call. This alternative has three parts:

First, end an illegitimate rule. That is not conditional on any alternative, credible or not.

Where there is a crime, there must be punishment. Without that, there is no justice, without that, there is no government.

Getting back your cell phone from a thief who stole it is not conditional on you proving you have a credible alternative for it.

The current government is itself an incredible alternative to the democratic norm,

which is an elected government. It is the product of a coup, wrought by fraud instead of fear,

wrought by gangsters instead of mudinees.

How to end that rule? I myself continue to favor People Power and civil disobedience over anything else. I join the bishops in eschewing violence. But I do not see how anyone can be bound by purely constitutional means to end a purely unconstitutional government. I do know one thing, which is that you cannot end that rule by trying to embarrass its wielders.

The devil himself may quote the Scriptures to suit his purposes, and lars themselves may quote truth to serve their purposes. I'm not surprised that GMA, Mike Defensor, Ignacio Bunye and Gari agree with the bishop that truth must be pursued relentlessly. GMA was the one who promised she would not run again; Bunye was the one who produced the "Hello Gari" tape and blamed it on others; Defensor was the one who kidnapped Ping Lacson's witness against Pidal and called it a rescue; and Gari, well, you have an embarrassment of riches there. Liars will lie even about lying.

Second, hold elections as soon as possible.

To repeat, hold elections only after GMA is gone, not before. She cannot be part of the election, she is the whole of the problem. The logic is simple and inescapable: The voters were robbed of their vote, like I said, the "who" is easiest to answer: The one who should govern is the one the people vote for.

What this means is that any transitional or caretaker council may not exist beyond a few months.

It may exist only for the purpose of preparing for elections. I personally think no more than six months. An unelected council

that exists beyond that will not usher in re-

forms, it will usher in tyranny. All that council has to do is line up the current Comelec commissioners in the Luneta, metaphorically speaking, and computerize canvassing. And fly in international observers to observe the elections. Those who say that doesn't go very far, far-wise, would do well to recollect Churchill's words: Democracy is a wretched system; it's just that all others are worse.

Third, establish a Truth Commission. I sub-

mit though that in lieu of the kind of Truth Commission Alfonso created in Argentina and Mandela in South Africa after the rule of the generals and apartheid respectively, we estab-

lish a Truth Commission that will investigate

not the torture wrought by the ousted regime

but the lies it perpetrated. I suggest a Truth Commission in its most literal sense, one that

will ferret out the truth and punish the liars.

At the very least that is so because the order

of lies that has been unleashed upon the coun-

try is not the kind that merely hurts it, it is the

kind that destroys it. The day we accept the

"Hello Gari" tape (whose complete authenti-

ty was proved beyond a shadow of doubt by

GMA herself, when she called up Pacquiao to

say "Hello Manny"—truly God plays tricks on

this country) as a "lapse in judgment" is the

day we stop being a country. We have no rea-

son to exist, we have reason only to subsist, bi-

foraging in distant lands. That would be the

true lapse in judgment, one that history will

punish severely.

At the very least, that is so because we need

to stem the tide of deceit and dishonesty that is

turning this country into a country of thieves.

We need a Truth Commission not only to

see the truth about our tyrants, we need it to see

Constituent assembly can cut GMA's term

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan



LAST TUESDAY, I LAMENTED THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS' call for the repeal of the Mining Act of 1995, whose validity the Supreme Court upheld in December 2004. In upholding its constitutionality, the Court ruled that foreign capital can venture into large-scale mining exploration, obviously after realizing there's not enough local capital for the kind of intensive capitalization large-scale mining entails. I argued that to allow our huge mineral wealth to remain buried under the earth while over half of our people remain mired in poverty is not charity but stupidity. I noted that the Philippines is the fifth richest country in the world in terms of mineral resources, with an estimated \$1 trillion worth of minerals. Thus, with even just a fraction of our mineral wealth we can pay off our \$55-billion foreign debt and still have enough to develop our economy.

I cited the case of Chile, whose economy has become the most progressive in Latin America, thanks largely to mining. In the decade leading up to 2000, when Chile's GDP grew by 7 percent yearly, making it one of the world's fastest-growing economies, mining accounted for 8.5 percent of its GDP. Minerals accounted for 47 percent of its exports in 2000, earning \$7.3 billion, an increase from \$5.9 billion in 1999, and employing 2 percent of the labor force. Five years later, the mining statistics for Chile were all up and Apec leaders, meeting in the capital of Santiago last year, were duly impressed by its progress.

I realize that the bishops mean well and only espouse the apprehensions of their communities about environmental degradation and being driven off their ancestral lands with the stepping up of mining activities. But they should also realize that many countries with far more stringent standards of environmental compliance than the Philippines have developed their mining industry and progressed, because they put up the necessary safeguards. One can think of Australia, Canada and Sweden, among other countries. Mining technology has progressed since the 1970s and there are now cleaner ways to extract

minerals. Let's fight for the necessary safeguards, but let's also help rescue our people from perpetual bondage to poverty, not by isolating the country, which is what the leftists want, but by developing our God-given resources properly.

Sen. Edgardo Angara is correct: the burning question of whether President Macapagal-Arroyo should finish her term or cut it short can only be settled by convening a constituent assembly (Consa). He said this can be done immediately by both chambers of Congress, whereas a constitutional convention takes time since its delegates will have to be elected first. Angara stressed that if the members of Congress agree among themselves that GMA's term ends in 2007, as former President Fidel V. Ramos has advocated, then that decision takes effect upon the ratification of a new Charter through a plebiscite. The Palace has said that only in this manner can GMA agree to shorten her term and not under pressure from street rallies or calls from her critics.

I have said this before and I'll say it again: Those who want to see GMA's term reduced should work on their congressmen and senators to agree to convene a constituent assembly and push for a transitory provision cutting her term. After that, the anti-GMA folks should campaign for a yes vote in a plebiscite. This is the democratic way to resolve this divisive issue.

By the way, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita was quoted as saying that Malacanang will push for the abolition of the Senate to pave the way for a unicameral Congress before next year's parliamentary elections. This statement won't win Senate support. Instead, the Palace should

say what Speaker Jose de Venecia has repeatedly said: that it's pushing for the abolition of both chambers so that a single chamber will emerge.

The senators are understandably reluctant to write their own obituary. At the wake last week for Local Government Secretary Angelo Reyes' mother, I told Sen. Richard Gordon that the senators seemed to be too preoccupied with preserving their office when conventional wisdom favors a unicameral system. He retorted, "But why not abolish the House? Why not 24 senators to form a parliament?"

But of course a parliamentary system being representative, the members of parliament have to represent specific districts, unlike the senators who are chosen at large and represent no specific constituency. I told Gordon he had nothing to fear since he's sure to be voted into parliament by the Zamboangans.

Amando Doronila is absolutely right in opining that criticisms about former Chief Justice Hilario Davide and former UP and now Kalayaan College president Jose Abueva's acceptance of various posts in the GMA administration stem from the perception that they are lending legitimacy to it. But so be it. I think these two distinguished gentlemen should be allowed to decide for themselves. If their careers should suffer, that's their lookout. But their decision should be respected.

The pettiness of opposition criticism is reaching unprecedented decibels. For instance, I ran into Bacolod City Rep. Monico Puentebella at the Centrist Democrat International convention last week and sought his reaction to the hale of criticisms that First Gentleman Mike Arroyo received on account of his high-profile presence at Manny Pacquiao's fight in Las Vegas. Puentebella pointed out that in the first place, it was Pacquiao who kept signaling to Arroyo to come up. Secondly, he said, when Pacquiao lost to Erik Morales in their first fight, Arroyo was there to share the boxer's sorrow. "What's wrong with sharing his moment of sweet victory, too?" asked the lawmaker.

Like the wrath of God

HUMAN FACE



Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

ember while Cardinal Vidal also issued one for Cebu. Several other bishops issued a letter for their respective dioceses.

Coming out with the post-election statement was not all that easy. As Bishop Antonio Fortich of Bacolod said, "It is 90 degrees Fahrenheit." Closed at the CBCP complex in Intramuros, several times retreating into silence to pray and discern, the 66 bishops (of the more than 100, several of whom are retired) divided themselves into groups and presented their reports on the elections. Namfrel's Jose Concepcion, Vicente Jayne and Jose Perla also came to give reports.

Not to be outdone, Imelda Marcos did a Nicodemus and came in the dead of night to reportedly convince the bishops not to come out with the statement. Ms Aquino came too, two hours before the bishops' press conference to "assure Cardinal Vidal of my non-violent course of action."

Last Sunday, there were "staged" walkouts while the letter was being read. The government TV crew was not far behind to shoot. Labor Minister Blas Ople would later take issue with the bishops while Comeled chairman Victorino Saveliano would stop going to church even as the Pope expressed confidence in the bishops' judgment. One thing was sure though—no one walked out of the CBCP conference contrary to what Marcos would later say at a press conference.

There were two drafts to choose from. The bishops voted for the stronger one... According to Escaler, four theologians helped in the drafting. They were Frs. Antonio Lambino and Pedro Achutegui, both Jesuits, Fr. Fausto Gomez of the Dominicans and Fr. Miranda of the SVDs.

While many bishops emerged from the conference beaming with satisfaction, there were a few who reportedly abstained from voting for the letter. "Don't ask me the names," said Escaler. "But there were three or four who kept putting up objections... But it was all done in an open spirit. We said, look, you're not telling us we're liars but that is how we perceive the situation—there is enough basis. We were practically unanimous."

Send feedback to ceresp@ufo.com.ph

Prisoner's lament

THE LONG VIEW



Manuel L. Quezon III

The confused—and confusing—provisions regarding parliamentary government, both in the ConCom's entirely rewritten draft Constitution, and the more parsimoniously amended—but even more flagrantly self-serving—draft being considered by the House, also serve as an indictment of Abueva's participation in the entire process. A man used as a fig leaf to help disguise the naked and priapic condition of the Speaker and his gang (and the modestly lowered averted eyes of their hijacked camp-follower, the President) may protest and denounce as much as he likes when his intimate proximity to the lust for power is pointed out—in this case, not only of the appointing authority, but also that of the House. He may consider it patronizing, arrogant, unfair, even personal; the product of "prejudice and pre-judgment" that is "consistent with his attitude toward the President and the coalition in power."

How can I help but feel prejudice against the indignity of Abueva being applauded in the Palace, even as the President who appointed him has never lifted even a pinky to pursue whatever tiny fruits were produced by her hand-picked Commission's labor? How can I not prejudge the coalition in power when one of its legislative foot soldiers, Rep. Constantino Jaraula, is incapable of explaining the inconsistencies of the House's own amendments, even as it is working to studiously ignore the Abueva Commission's handiwork? How can I not be hostile in my attitude to both, after reading their handiwork? Most of all, how can I not reach the sad conclusion that, despite the President and her party mocking his most cherished advocates to his face, Abueva still strongly defends the entire process he's been trotted out to decorate? The pathos of such a man, insisting his tin-foil crown represents the laurels of genuine public service, is so heartbreaking it makes me mad. They chained him to their ambitions, and still he wags his tail.

The party of the President, who appointed Abueva ConCom chair, apparently thinks not. For the Lakas-controlled House has replaced the ConCom's language with a series of provisions that calls for the "ultimate establishment of a federal system." As Benjamin Diarra once said, "Finality is not the language of politics." And when legislators speak in terms of the ultimate, you can be sure they mean the indefinite.

Comments welcome at www.quezon.ph/blog

Six

IT WAS FIVE O'CLOCK ON A BREEZY MONDAY MORNING. My head was still buried in my soft pillow and I was rubbing my left cheek. Somewhere between being awake and asleep, I yielded to the temptation to continue my slumber. I forced myself to dream.

I was 6 years old again. There was no need to hurry. No long lines and traffic to bear. My day's activities consisted of endless games, sloppy eating, running and smashing antique vas-

YOUNG BLOOD

Simon Louis Errol B. Torres

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

The alarm clock suddenly rings. Is it the end of the world? The banging sound in my ear makes it seem so. I force myself to get up.

I'm no longer 6. My feet are bigger and I'm a wolf below my torso. I stare at myself in the mirror and all the tell-tale signs of staying up late so many nights are painted beneath my eyes. There are white strands of hair on my head, but luckily no wrinkles on my forehead yet.

I reach for a towel and take a bath by myself. Put my clothes on by myself and make breakfast by myself. I reach for the match box in the cupboard without hearing a high-pitched voice telling me not to do so. I do not need a chair to step on to get the bowls on the drawer. There's no hand to hold my spoon but my own.

I go outside and cross the street without an arm to cling on to. I do not stand in the middle of the crowd crying for my mom. I get on my way in a robotic fashion.

I have grown up. I have become an independent soul. Carebears and Bioman are icons of the past. Rambo slippers are now comforts of a distant child.

I cannot go back. I cannot run and hide behind my father's legs when a man with a thick beard arrives. I cannot run around the neighborhood sucking my thumb. I cannot squeeze myself inside a tree house when I am lonely and sad. I cannot poop in my pants or wherever. I cannot dive to the floor and wall when I don't get what I want.

I am a man now. And social norms tell me I must be gentle and not too loud. There are expectations I need to meet and responsibilities I must fulfill. I should act my age and be a model for the young. I should be mindful of the consequences of my actions and decisions. I have to face pain on my own.

And yet, at times, I miss the little guy. Worry-free. Oozing with energy. Spontaneous and free. I miss the chuckle and the infectious smile. I miss rolling like a madman on the spongy grass in the park. I miss hopping like a bunny or dancing on the street gutter. I miss the chocolate and ice cream. I miss the camaraderie and tender love when my brother carried me on his back.

I miss the pinches on my cheeks given by doting aunts and cousins. I miss the stinging sensation when the leather belt came in contact with the skin. I miss the bumps and blisters on the head, elbows and knees. I miss the innocence, the silliness and the pain.

But it's inevitable. You have to let go some time. Sometimes you have to play along not because it's the right thing to do but because it's the practice. I have to accept that childhood is now in my past and there's no going back there. Maybe I can return when I reach 80, but something tells me it will not be the same.

Childhood is a completely different world from my own. It's a world where everything seems to happen for the first time, a place of discovery and excitement, where cartoon characters are real and alive. Audrey is an alien word there. It's a world I want to forever belong to but to which I cannot return.

The next morning, it rained. I got up, went outside, spread my arms and let the rain touch my face and run through my hands. It was bliss. I was 6 again.

Simon Louis Errol E. Torres, 23, finished BA Philosophy at the University of the Philippines in Diliman.

Return to the wild

Tyrone Limon

IT HAS BEEN OVER A DECADE SINCE I LEFT THE FABLED courts of my youth. These are the very same courts on which I played almost every single day of my high school life. Though some of the physical structures have been upgraded, the place is still very much the facility I have grown accustomed to. Looking at the familiar goal posts, backboards and cement floor is enough to transport me back in time.

Memories come rushing back in black-and-white images: of skinny teenagers sprinting down the lanes to score on fast-breaks, of jumpshots, hookshots, reverse lay-ups, tap boards and high-scoring rebounds. Everybody's bursting with energy. Every facet of the game is done seemingly effortless. Sweaty and enthusiastic high school boys shout and laughing at the top of their lungs, even over the most mundane topics. No wonder these years are considered to be among the best. This is the time when, full of life and carefree, one can play hoops like there's no tomorrow.

But our pick-up game is about to begin. Here I am, 40 pounds heavier, with considerably deteriorating reflexes, playing full-court against players almost half my age. These aren't your average basketball-crazed youngsters; they are well-trained and conditioned varsity members. Instead of shrinking in trepidation, I take it as a challenge. Competitive juices are still flowing. No matter the age, gender and social status, a basketball game is still a basketball game. And a basketball player will always be a basketball player.

After a slow start, I have a good grasp of the situation. Walking several times up and down the court has helped me get into the groove. Though my mind is still as alert as it has always been, my body doesn't respond immediately. It's not as quick as I want it to be.

When the scrum is done, my team trails by only a few points. Surprisingly, all the jostling, banging and sprinting make me feel right at home. It's like being let loose after a long time in captivity. Though my body has taken its worst pounding in many years, my mind and most especially my soul are reinvigorated. Sure, I scored 10 points, got a few rebounds and issued a couple of assists, but the most important thing was being able to play again.

The exercise may have lasted just two hours, but it was all I needed to have a fresh perspective. Sometimes as soon as a person leaves school, he forgets that the simple things are what make one happiest. In my youth, it was on these courts where struggles were magnified, dreams were chased, characters were developed and history unraveled. And after more than a decade, these courts still did that for me.

Tyrone Limon, 29, is a basketball coach at the Ateneo, the University of Asia and the Pacific and Reedley School.

INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Pope picks first Filipino parish priest in Rome

By Gil Francis G. Arevalo
Daraga, Albay

I DREAMED [OF HAVING] A BIG FAMILY OF MY own, but I ended up having a parish that is itself a big family," confesses Fr. Jesus Maraño, a native of Barangay Anislag in Daraga town, Albay.

Father Jess, as he is more popularly known, was appointed priest of the Our Lady of Fatima Parish Church in the Diocese of Rome by Pope Benedict XVI on Nov. 6, 2005. He said it was natural that after 10 or more years of serving as a parochial vicar in different parishes, he knew he would be a parish priest.

He has stayed for almost 21 years in the Holy See since he began higher studies and eventually becoming a parochial vicar for 13 years in seven different parishes in Rome.

Among these are the San Vigilio Parish Church, Parish of the Resurrection, Pablo Martinez Parish Church, and other churches in the western and eastern parts of Rome.

But being anointed by the Pope as the first Filipino and Asian parish priest of the Our Lady of Fatima Parish Church still surprises him up to now.

This is the first time, Father Jess says, that the Vatican appointed a non-Italian parish priest in the diocese. What is more astounding is his being a Filipino.

Hometown

In the third week of January, two months after his appointment, Father Jess returned to his parents' ancestral house in Daraga for a two-week vacation.

It was a happy reunion with his family, friends, church colleagues, former high school and college

mentors, and some benefactors, he claims. These people have given him undying support and love since he chose to become a priest.

"My heart and my passion to serve are always here, for this is where my calling and my commitment to serve God and His people started," Father Jess claims.

He adds that his experiences in living with and helping the sick and dying, as well as the indigent and underprivileged, started here.

It was not, however, the first time that Father Jess visited and celebrated Masses in his native town. "I always want to come home here in Albay," he says.

Father Jess says he receives the same warm and hospitable welcome in both Rome and Daraga.

God's grace

He says he is serving 5,000 Italians in his parish and considers this "a great responsibility, but I don't find it hard to find ways to serve my kababayan," he says.

In 2000, he established a scholarship foundation to support indigent youths of Daraga. At present, 61 elementary, high school and college students benefit from the program. He says it had been his long-time dream to come up with a support program like this for the youth.

"I know how it feels to belong to a very poor family—education is very hard to sustain. Right now, I'm very lucky to be in a position to help them. There are so many



FR. JESUS Maraño, who was appointed priest of the Our Lady of Fatima Parish Church in the Diocese of Rome, is reunited with relatives and friends in his hometown in Daraga, Albay.

benefactors out there that continue to support me in this very noble endeavor," he discloses.

Michael Macasunag, who is now in third year college, says he's very thankful that since high school, he has been a beneficiary of the foundation.

Liliosa Morada shares the happiness that the foundation bestows on her son, who is now a seminarian and who wants to follow in the footsteps of Father Jess.

Second child

Born on Dec. 25, 1964, Father Jess is the second of seven siblings. His father was a carpenter and his mother, a dressmaker.

He confides that every time he comes back home, he can't help but cry when he reminisces the sacrifices of his family in order to survive and for his siblings to have an education.

But God's grace comes in a different way. According to him, poverty was not really a burden to his dream of finishing his studies and helping his family. Just like his scholars, he, too, was very lucky to have benefactors and patrons that financially supported him.

Father Jess finished his elementary and high school education in

his hometown.

His first career choice was to be an engineer, but due to financial constraints, he had to take Education, major in English, and got a scholarship grant from the Bicol University.

He maintained his scholarship even as he worked part-time on campus, including being a janitor. Occasionally, he helped his father in carpentry projects.

Father Jess says he never felt ashamed of his work since it taught him a lot to become more humble and develop his love for hard work.

Calling

But not known to many, including his parents and college sweetheart, he frequently visited the nearby provincial hospital. This became routine during his first two years in college. If he had extra money, he would buy food or he would give half of his earnings to the sick.

"I kept it a secret that time because I didn't want people close to me to wonder or mock me. But it gave me a different kind of inspiration to study and work hard without knowing that little by little it had awakened the calling for me to serve Him in a very different

way," he says.

"Ironically, I really wanted to have a big family if ever I decided to marry my girlfriend. I wanted many children as much as possible. I knew it will bring a lot of joy."

Surprising everyone, he told his family, close friends, teachers—and yes, his girlfriend, one day that the time had come for him to enter the seminary.

Loneliness engulfed his family, especially his father. "Out of anger, my late father wanted to punch me, while my mother was saddened as becoming a priest was more expensive than taking up a particular course in a college," Father Jess recalls.

Duties

In 1984, against everybody's will, he entered the minor seminary. Fortunately, he says, his family did not spend any single centavo.

His Grade 2 teacher, Selfa Loria, says that she saw in her young pupil that he would someday become a priest. Aside from being humble, he was very friendly, courageous and diligent, she says.

"It's really God's will that many patrons sponsored my studies to become a priest, including the opportunity to study in Rome," he says.

While in Italy and since he was ordained a priest in 1992 at the Vatican, Father Jess has continued to support his family with the help of benefactors there. He became so busy in his priestly duties that he could not find time to talk to his family or come back home, even if he wanted to.

When his father died in 2000, coinciding with the World Youth Day celebration at the Vatican, Father Jess decided to come home at least twice a year.

"I felt so sad because that same year was the first time that my father made an overseas call and persuaded me to come home for they really missed me. I told him that I was very busy for the jubilee year celebration. I didn't know that he would hear his voice as he died after two months in an accident," he recounts.

His mother died in 2002.

Aside from his scholarship foundation, all of his siblings now lead modest lives and mutual support remains very strong.

As a parish priest, he says, he plans to continue propagating the importance of the foundation of family and educating the youth.

Mindoro youths learn windsurfing

By Marciano T. Virola Jr.
Puerto Galera, Oriental Mindoro

F OR THE UNINITIATED, windsurfing may seem a daunting sport.

But according to Melo Garcia, a member of the windsurfing national team player and native of Puerto Galera in Oriental Mindoro, the sport is really all about sailing and is not difficult to learn.

"In the 1980s, windsurfing was difficult to learn. Equipment then were made of carbon. Now they are made of aluminum. With simple equipment, even children can learn the basics in 60 minutes. Or even someone as old as 70 can do so," he adds.

Garcia, 40, knows what he's talking about. He owns Sandbar Resort and the whole Boquete Island in Puerto Galera where the leisure place is located.

"This is a perfect place for windsurfing. The wind is strong all year long, especially from November to April, and the water is warm. It is also safe because it is a cove," he boasts.

Grandfather

The sportsman's grandfather came to Puerto Galera from Batangas in the 1930s. He was a boat captain transporting copra and other products, dropping anchorage near Boquete. He acquired land parcels on the island and eventually owned all 78 hectares of it.

Boquete is sandwiched by the China Sea in the west and the Pacific Ocean in the east. "From here, you can watch the sunrise facing one beach and the sunset facing the opposite beach," Melo says.

Foreigners started to come in 1978, when hotels were only available



WINDSURFING enthusiast Melo Garcia

says animatedly.

Jobs

Despite his love for the sport, Garcia had to stop windsurfing for a while to study in Manila. He took up a business course at the Adamson University.

He took his first job at a shipyard in Batangas, after meeting his employer in a tennis game at—where else?—in their resort in Boquete.

"I was a sales engineer. My job was to convince ship owners to let us repair their boats. I was also the test-pilot for the boats made before these were returned to the owners," Melo recalls.

He worked for six years until 2000 when his father told him to come back and manage the island. His father died last year.

He eventually developed the resort.

Training youths

Garcia wants to revive windsurfing in Puerto Galera, which peaked in the '80s and '90s.

He believes that former athletes of windsurfing and other sports have not been getting the recognition they deserve.

Garcia's enthusiasm about windsurfing is largely due to the chance it offers to local youths to excel in sports. Under his windsurfing scholarship program, children, aged 10 or 11 years old and mostly come from fishing families, are trained in the sport for free.

"I have also started training children for dinghy sailing, which uses a small sailboat with two crewmen," Garcia says.

With a little support, he may yet succeed in honing the skills of Mindoro's young athletes.

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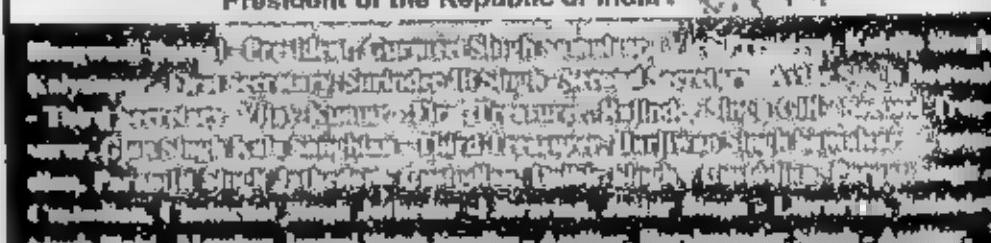


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Tarlac clashes death toll rises to 11

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CAMP OLIVAS, PAMPANGA—THE DEATH TOLL IN the series of clashes between communist rebels and government soldiers in Sta. Ignacia, Tarlac, has risen to 11, a military official said on Wednesday.

Maj. Gen. Romeo Tolentino, head of the military's Northern Luzon Command, said three more New People's Army rebels and a soldier, identified as Army Corporal Gerry Galas, were added to the seven fatalities reported on Tuesday.

Tolentino said the bodies of eight slain rebels, one of them a

woman, have yet to be claimed from the Funeraria Corpus in Sta. Ignacia as of 3 p.m. Wednesday.

He said he was certain that more rebels were killed in the clashes, citing body parts found strewn in the clash sites.

"Lasing-lasog sila (They have been dismembered)," Tolentino said.

He said there were no civilians

among the recovered bodies because all had guns beside them when found after the gunfight and air strikes in the villages of Sta. Inez West, Labney, Lawacaulag, David and Linglingay.

"The militants were saying they (the fatalities) were farmers. But why was no one claiming their bodies?" Tolentino said.

Lt. Col. Gregory Cayetano, commander of the Army's 71st Infantry Battalion that engaged the rebels, said 12 M-16 rifles and a grenade launcher were recovered from the clash sites.

But the human rights advocate group Karapatan contradicted the military's reports, saying two of the 10 people killed were farm-

ers living in San Jose town.

Emil Paragas, Tarlac coordinator of Karapatan, identified them as Allan Ibasan, 18, and Dante Salgado, 17.

Paragas said Ibasan's brother, Glenn, told their team that soldiers took Ibasan and Salgado while they were cutting bamboo in Barangay Villa Aglipay in San Jose before the encounter erupted.

The bodies of Ibasan and Salgado were claimed by their relatives on Wednesday.

Paragas said accounts gathered by Karapatan in the villages indicated that more civilians were killed or hurt in what was so far described as the military's biggest operation in Tarlac, one

of the known strongholds of the Communist Party of the Philippines in Central Luzon.

The NPA's Nelson Mesina Command said its field commanders were still assessing the death toll on their side.

The clashes highlight the continuing anti-insurgency operations of the government that a Left wing organization in Southern Tagalog said led to human rights violations similar to those committed during martial law.

"The military death squad is on the loose again," said Leng Jucutan, chair of Karapatan-Quezon chapter.

On Wednesday evening, Roberto de la Cruz, Anakpawis coordinator in Lucena, was shot

dead inside his canteen by a motorcycle-riding assailant.

Police said two unidentified suspects aboard a motorcycle and wearing helmets stopped in front of the roadside eatery owned by the victim.

One of the riders proceeded to the canteen and shot the victim several times, after which he casually walked away and sped off aboard the motorcycle.

Jucutan said the pattern of the killing was the same as that of the murder of Ronnie Almaje, a Bayan Muna coordinator, who was also killed by two motorcycle riders last year. With a report from Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

ROUNDUP

Cordillera cops are tops

CAMP DANGWA, BENGUET—The Cordillera police was declared the country's best regional police office in 2005. Chief Supt. Leonardo Dionisio, Cordillera police director, received the award from President Macapagal-Arroyo during the Philippine National Police's 15th anniversary celebration in Camp Crame on Monday. The Benguet police office, led by Senior Supt. Vilamor Bumanglag, was named best provincial police office in the country. The awardees were chosen during the joint inspection and audit conducted by the National Police Commission, PNP Internal Affairs Service and the Civil Service Commission in August and September last year.

PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

3 killed in ambush

CANDON CITY—Three men were killed when their group was ambushed by armed men in Burgos, Ilocos Sur, on Monday. Police said the fatalities—Saturnino Gayyed, 40; Ryan Santiago, 18, and Profacio Dait, 49—and their five companions came from a wake in nearby Liliwita town and were crossing a river in Barangay Bessang when they were shot at past 12 a.m. on Monday. In an interview over a local radio station, Insp. Fredelito Calibuso, Burgos police chief, said Gayyed and Dait died instantly while Santiago died in a clinic in Santa Maria town.

Leoncio Balbin Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Soldier slain in N. Cotabato

KIDAPAWAN CITY—Suspected communist rebels shot dead a soldier in Makilala, North Cotabato on Monday, police said Tuesday. Makilala police chief Senior Insp. Leo Ajero identified the victim as Sgt. Ernie Gallardo, 40, of the Army's 39th Infantry Battalion. Ajero said Gallardo was standing in front of a variety store in Barangay Old Bulatukan when two pistol-wielding suspects attacked him. He died from multiple gunshot wounds in the head. In Columbo, Sultan Kudarat, suspected communist rebels shot dead two B'laan natives on Sunday before fleeing with the victims' horses, according to reports reaching the Central Mindanao police command.

Edwin O. Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Rebels hold 3 persons

DAVAO CITY—New People's Army (NPA) rebels under Leonardo Pitao, alias Commander Parago, abducted three people in Barangay Mapula in Paquibato District here, the military said Monday. The victims were in a vehicle when forced at gunpoint by the rebels to go with them on Jan. 25, according to Col. Rolando Jose Bautista, commander of the Army's 73rd Infantry Battalion. With the recent abduction, Bautista said it appeared that Parago has recovered from his illness and has started to lead the local Pulang Bagani command again.

Judy Quilos, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Misuari hospitalized

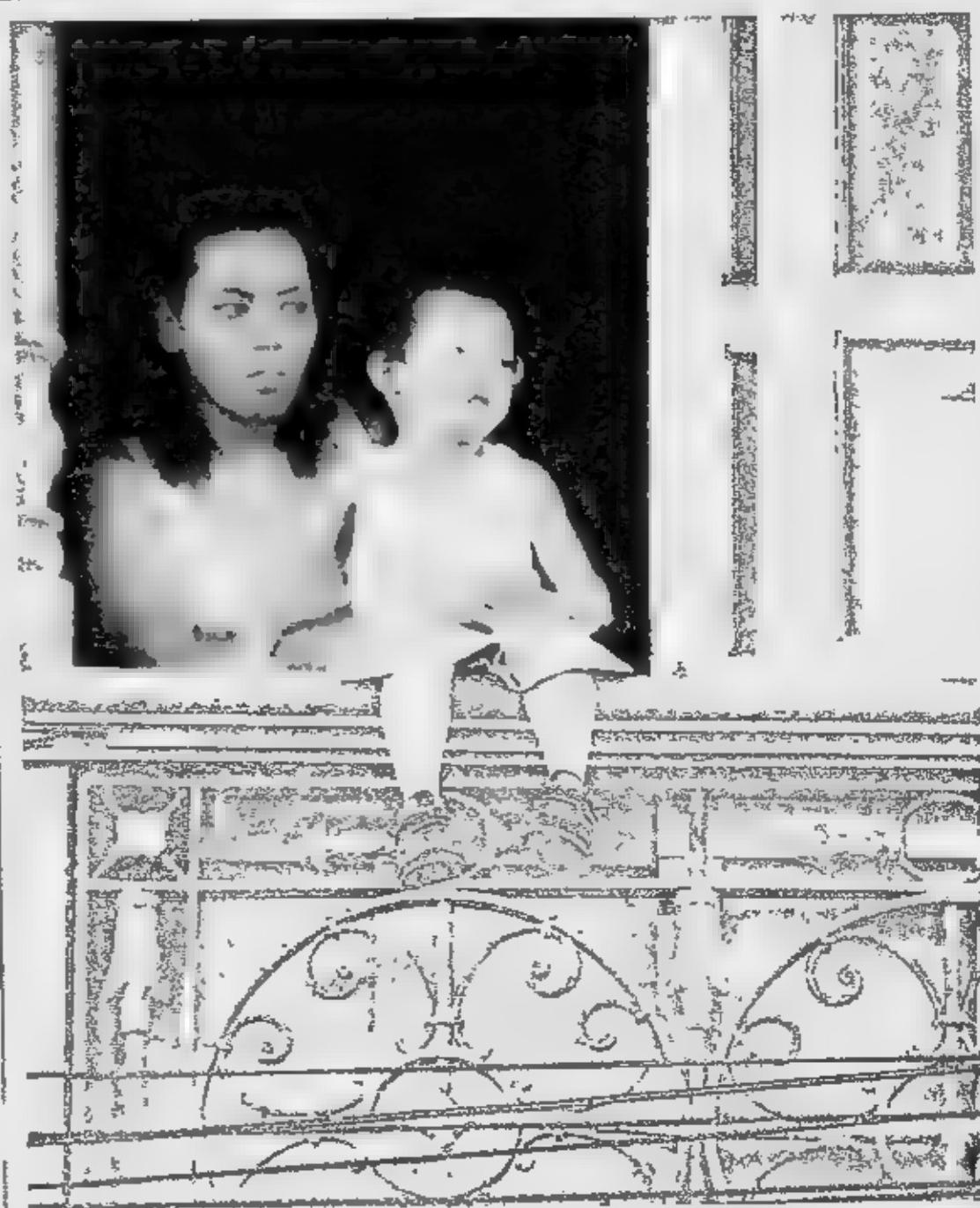
JOLLO, Sulu—Moro leader Nur Misuari on Sunday said he was admitted at the St. Luke's Hospital for abdominal pains and erratic blood pressure. Earlier, a court granted Misuari a 10-day furlough after the Moro leader, who was charged with the 2001 uprising here and in Zamboanga City that killed about 100 people, complained he was becoming ill. Reached by phone, Misuari said he could not discuss his condition yet because he was still to be checked up. "Tell our people that Insha Allah (with Allah's will), I am in good health," he said. Misuari said he "could not give further statement because I am not allowed to do so." Misuari's followers in Sulu believe the medical checkup was the final stage for their leader's exile. One of them, a trusted Misuari lieutenant, said on condition of anonymity that the Moro leader would be exiled to Davao. Moro groups, including the rival Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), have been pressing the government to allow the Moro leader to leave the country.

Ed General, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Pneumonia alert

COTABATO CITY—Health authorities in North Cotabato have warned residents, especially those living in far-flung areas, to take precautionary steps to prevent pneumonia, the leading cause of death in the province in 2005, with 132 deaths caused by the disease. "This is alarming," said Felina Hernandez, Cotabato provincial hospital chief nurse. She said residents should volunteer to come to the health centers for preventive measures. Most of the pneumonia cases last year were recorded in Arakan, Magpet, Antipas and President Roxas, North Cotabato's far-flung towns. She said most of the patients sought treatment only after they were already in serious condition.

Edwin O. Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau



ARNOLD ALMACEN/PDI VISAYAS BUREAU

Legazpi mayor appeals Comelec ruling

LEGAZPI CITY MAYOR NOEL E. ROSAL has appealed the decision of the Second Division of the Commission on Elections declaring mayoral rival Michael Victor Imperial as winner by about 2,000 votes during the May 2004 elections.

Rosal questioned the Comelec's decision to invalidate 14,067 votes from his original votes of 44,277 votes that resulted in 30,210 votes for Rosal and 32,085 votes for Imperial.

The Comelec's Second Division is composed of Commissioners Florencio A. Tuason Jr. and Meloh Sadaun.

Rosal said he wondered how, all of a sudden, 14,067 of his votes were invalidated. He claimed there was no technical examination made on the questioned ballots to determine whether these were really spurious.

Instead, he said, what was done was a summary procedure.

The Comelec apparently failed to consider the 110 affidavits of teachers certifying that most of the ballots recounted no longer bore their original signatures, Rosal added.

He said it would be hard to manipulate election returns as they bore the signatures of the repre-

sentatives of the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting and the National Movement for Free Elections, party representatives and teachers as board chairs.

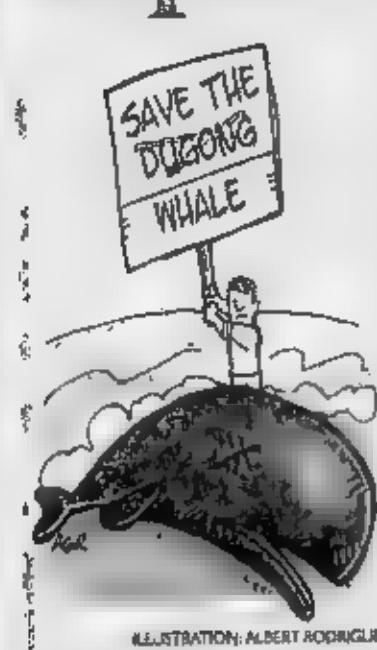
Rosal filed a motion for reconsideration while Imperial filed a writ of execution of Comelec's decision.

Rosal also said during the recount, he got 39,601 votes while Imperial had 39,058 votes.

The Legazpi Board of Canvassers declared Rosal winner with 44,277 votes against Imperial's 33,275 votes.

Gina Rodriguez, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Report says it was whale, not dugong



LEGAZPI CITY—THE CARCASS found on the shore of a village in a controversial mining site in Albay belonged to a sperm whale, not a dugong (sea cow), as thought earlier, officials said on Tuesday.

Rey Juan, Bicol regional director of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB), quoted two other officials as saying the carcass, earlier thought to be that of a dugong, was actually that of a sperm whale.

A report by the MGB regional office said the carcass was brought to the municipal cemetery to be buried since it was emitting foul odor.

"Foul odor also emanated from the burial site (which then had to

be deodorized) with chlorine and Lysol," the report added.

A press statement from Lafayette Philippines Inc. said that a picture of the whale's carcass was attached to the MGB report and showed a fin on its top side, indicating it was not a dugong. The whale was pregnant.

It said that, according to the MGB report, the whale most likely died from its wounds.

Wounds

It (whale) "bore conusions, lacerations and wounds all over its body."

According to Lafayette, "the (MGB) report did not say if the wounds were man-inflicted or not. The report in effect rejected

allegations by antimining activists blaming Lafayette's mining activities for the whale's death. It was also the activists who claimed it was a dugong."

In a statement, Lafayette said its mining operations in Rapu-Rapu, Albay was highly unlikely to be the cause of the whale's death since smaller fishes would have died, too, before the whale did if the waters of Rapu-Rapu were indeed contaminated.

In an earlier interview, Jose Belando, 56, the fisherman who first saw the carcass, said "I saw it (dugong) yesterday morning (Jan. 26) in the shore near a tree in my house, with its stomach's side up."

"At first I did not notice it since

I thought that it was just an ordinary fish and I would not benefit from it," he said.

His neighbors milled around the big bloody carcass and thought at first that it was a dolphin.

He could not tell the cause of its death. "I just saw it there. I could not tell how it died."

The MGB report was prepared by Christian Oropesa, senior science research specialist, and engineer Roy Collamar.

The mining firm said official findings released only last week showed that the island's waters sampled on Jan. 6 and 19 were well within the government's strict cyanide standards. Joanna P. Los Baños, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

The road map was designed by Lt. Gen. Cristobal Balaoing, outgoing PMA superintendent and the same man who drew up the AFP modernization plan.

Balaoing told the Inquirer earlier that fixing PMA is a way to plug a vacuum in fresh career officers as the AFP retires most of its generals.

Inspired by reforms made at the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York, Balaoing said the road map reshaped the curriculum so that even simple subjects like English are designed to develop a professional military career for cadets.

At its most basic, the road map defines the PMA's reason for existence and its political anchor, he said.

It introduces a modern honor code, which binds all PMA graduates to a uniform moral system.

The document also specifies that the government needs future military officers to simultaneously be the country's administrative managers, statisticians, teachers, engineers, role models and combatants.

Balaoing submitted the road map to Senga in front of PMA cadets, after he relinquished his post to Brig. Gen. Leopoldo Maligalig, a member of PMA "Magillas" Class of 1976.

Leopoldo, the younger brother of the RAM spokesperson, became the academy's 51st superintendent after serving as its 51st commandant of cadets under Balaoing's term.

Processo Maligalig, a member of PMA Class 1969, said the road map is the most inventive course taken by the academy. Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

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METRO

Editor Ester G. Dipasupil

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Protest settles fight for top cops title

By DJ Yap and Jocelyn R. Uy

IT WAS THE QUEZON CITY POLICE District (QCPD) against Manila's Finest. And the winner is the Southern Police District (SPD).

Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr. yesterday protested the selection of the Manila Police

District (MPD) as the top Metro Manila police force of 2005, saying the honor should go to his men.

Belmonte said that based on the consolidated performance evaluated ratings of Metro Manila's five police districts, the QCPD garnered the most points, with a total score of 2,960.36 compared

to the MPD's 2,858.77, from the fourth quarter of 2004 to the third quarter of 2005.

In fact, Belmonte said, the SPD's score was higher than the MPD, with 2,958.64 points. The ranking should therefore be: QCPD, first; SPD, second, MPD, third; Northern Police District, fourth; and fifth, Eastern Police

District, he added.

Sought for comment, National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) Director Vidal Querol told the INQUIRER, "The best police district is the MPD. The second best is SPD."

However, since the MPD was already honored as the Best Police District for 2005 during the

15th PNP anniversary celebration last Monday, the National Capital Region Police District of the Year award will go to the second placer—the SPD, he added.

Supt. Agrimero Cruz Jr., NCRPO public information office head and member of the awards committee, explained that the selection of the winner was not en-

tirely based on the consolidated performance evaluated ratings earned by police districts.

"It is just 30 percent of the total criteria for the award," Cruz clarified although he did not say what the other criteria were. The award will be handed out today at the NCRPO headquarters in Camp Bagong Diwa, Taguig City.

'Love camp' to host special kids in QC

By DJ Yap

THIS FEBRUARY, A SPECIAL kind of love will flow at Camp Pag-ibig in Quezon City, as it celebrates 30 years of giving cheer and hope to differently abled children.

From Feb. 18-19, hundreds of special children from all over Metro Manila and neighboring provinces will converge at the Balara Filter Plant in Diliman, to participate in activities especially prepared for them.

Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr. will be the camp host and honorary chair, a role he has assumed since 2001, organizers said.

"Camp Pag-ibig is designed to provide children with disabilities opportunities to enhance their so-

cialization skill, paving the way for full integration and participation in the community," they added.

The annual camping activity was started in 1976 by the Philippine Association for the Retarded Inc. as the highlight of the observance of National Retarded Children Week, as provided for in Presidential Proclamation No. 1385.

Mascots and clowns

Like any camp, tents will be put up, with clowns and mascots performing for the children during a fun-filled program. A parents' forum will also be held.

The activities were planned and designed to make the children remember the festivity for years to come, according to camp

director Jorge Banal Sr., Senate Jaycees president and a former Quezon City councilor.

This year's camp will also be bigger, with participants coming from special schools in Regions 3 and 4 joining in, as stated in a Department of Education (DepEd) memorandum, said co-camp di-

rector Erlinda Lolarga.

An estimated 2,500 campers are expected to attend, organizers said.

Highlighting this year's Camp Pag-ibig is the blessing and unveiling of a marker describing the camp's history for the past 30 years, followed by a thanksgiving

Patrons and sponsors are encouraged to chip in to ensure that the 30th anniversary of the camp will be a success, Banal said.

Camp Pag-ibig organizers and sponsors include the Quezon City government, QC Capitol Jaycees, DepEd, Manila Water Co., Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System and the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

METROBRIEFS

No toll hike, but ...



THE PHILIPPINE National Construction Corp. (PNCC) said it will not raise toll rates even after the government raised the value-added tax (VAT) from 10 percent to 12 percent beginning yesterday. "VAT is not included in toll

rates for now," said PNCC chair Arthur Aguilar in an interview. But airline and shipping firms have already raised their fares, while public land transport group said they will ask the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board for another fare increase if the price of diesel hits P34 to P35 per liter. Vigor Mendoza, the transport group's lawyer, said they will monitor fuel prices in the coming weeks. Diesel prices went up by 50 and 60 centavos a liter following the implementation of the 12 percent VAT. Should diesel prices go up to P35 per liter, the transport groups will push for a P1 to P1.50 fare hike for the first four kilometers, Mendoza said.

Clarissa S. Batino

Lost and found

THANKS to the tracker system installed in her cellular phone, the 16-year-old granddaughter of the late House Speaker Ramon Mitra recovered the

phone which she lost to a robber last month. The victim said the suspect, Magellan Boaloy, took her cell phone (a Nokia 6630) and wallet while she was eating in a restaurant on President's Avenue in BF Homes, Parañaque on Jan. 17. Boaloy, however, made several calls using the victim's phone, which enabled the telecommunications service provider to track down his whereabouts via a tracking system, city police chief Supt. Ronald Estilles said. The suspect was eventually arrested nine days later while the cell phone was found about to be sold at a shopping mall in Barangay San Antonio.

Jocelyn R. Uy

Wrong move for cops



TWO POLICEMEN and their companion were arrested the other night for allegedly robbing and extorting money from two men in Pasig City. SPC1 Ramon Hairul, 45, and PO3 Alex Recio, 38, both of the Pasig City Police Community Precinct 4, were arrested with Rodel Jacla, 30, during an entrapment operation the other night. Recio and Jacla allegedly approached Roland Cabrera, 36, and Richard Espejo, 23, residents of Taguig City, near the Malya Ng Pasig Public Market at about 12:30 a.m. Tuesday, Pasig City Police Investigation

chief Supt. Gerry Galvan said in a report. Recio and Jacla took the victims' cell phones, P3,500 in cash and Cabrera's gold necklace. The suspects told Cabrera he could claim his necklace at the Police Market Detachment for P1,000. When Cabrera showed up at the detachment, Hairul gave him back the necklace after he was given P1,000. Recio and Jacla were arrested during follow-up operations, Galvan said.

Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

St. Ezekiel honored

DEVOTEES are expected to flock to Recoletos Chapel in Antipolo until Feb. 9 as they recall the arrival of St. Ezekiel Moreno in the Philippines. A series of Masses for the sick will be celebrated in the saint's honor at 9 a.m. for nine consecutive days. Heater-priest Fr. Ferdinand T. Hernandez, OFM, rector of St. Ezekiel Moreno Novitiate-Recoletos, Antipolo, said that "it is but fitting that we celebrate Masses for the sick as a way of thanking the saint for his dedication and ministry to us Filipinos, especially the poor and the sick." According to historical records, the patron saint for cancer patients arrived in the country on Feb. 10, 1870 and served for 15 years until May 1885 when he was recalled by his superiors in Spain. The Recoletos-Antipolo chapel is located in Nuestra Señora de la Paz Subd., Sumulong Highway, Antipolo. For more details, contact Sr. Miriam Ruiz, SARF, of St. Ezekiel Moreno Healing Ministry at 0927-3216193.

Montalban, Capas dumps await Metro trash—MMDA

By Terri V. Quismundo

THE METROPOLITAN MANILA Development Authority (MMDA) yesterday urged the public to segregate their garbage, saying this will prove helpful if the closure of two controlled waste dumps pushes through on Feb. 16.

In case the two dumps close, Rolando Paguinto, acting chief of the MMDA's Solid Waste Management Office (SWMO), said the MMDA, overall provider of disposal facilities for the garbage generated by the metropolis, may divert the trash to the 14-hectare Montalban Solid Waste Disposal Facility in Rodriguez, Rizal, and the Clark Development Corporation in Capas, Tarlac. "Of course, that's only a short-term solution," he added.

According to Paguinto, segregation reduces the volume of trash generated by a household by 30 percent.

"The life span of the disposal facility is lengthened because of the reduction in waste generated everyday," Paguinto told the INQUIRER.

"When it comes to problems about garbage, we need the help of the people. In the event we experience a crisis, if they help us by segregating and bringing out trash only on the day of the collection, at least that lessens the effects of a garbage problem," he said. The Navotas and Payatas (Quezon City) dumps are scheduled to close on Feb. 16, in compliance with provisions of Republic Act 9003 or the Ecological Waste Management Act, which orders the closure of all open and controlled dumps.

Of the 7,000 tons of garbage generated by Metro Manila daily, Paguinto said 1,200 tons is taken to Navotas and 1,500 tons to Payatas. On the other hand, local governments, through their waste segregation and recovery programs, process 1,000 tons of trash.

Right now, Montalban is the biggest recipient of Metro Manila's trash, receiving 1,800 tons of garbage from 10 of Metro Manila's 17 cities and municipalities. Capas, on the other hand, processes 500 tons of trash daily.

Manila Water



MAYNILAD WATER

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

Effective February 1, 2006, the Concessionaires of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System, Manila Water Company, Inc. and Maynilad Water Services Inc., will implement the 12% Value Added Tax as per Memorandum from Executive Secretary Eduardo R. Ermita dated January 31, 2006.

Caloocan marks 44th year

A JOB FAIR, FAMILY day and a mass wedding will be the highlights of a week-long celebration marking Caloocan City's 44th founding anniversary starting next week. Caloocan was declared a city on Feb. 16, 1962. "A family day would highlight the celebration to give importance to the family as the basic unit of society," said Alvin Relicano, the city's public information officer. The mass wedding, on the other hand, will be open to unwed couples or those who want to get married but lack money. The wedding will be held at the Monumento Circle, in front of the Bonifacio monument, Relicano said. Businessmen, on the other hand, will be allowed to display their products in a flea market to be put up by the city government for the occasion.

Nancy C. Carvajal



PHILIPPINE DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION

NOTICE TO THE DEPOSITORS OF THE CLOSED RURAL BANK OF TANGALAN (AKLAN), INC.

- Pursuant to Monetary Board Resolution No. 97 dated January 26, 2006 ordering the closure of the Rural Bank of Tangalan (Aklan), Inc. (RBTA), the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation (PDIC) will start its operations for the servicing of claims for insured deposits in the closed RBTA on Friday, February 3, 2006.
- Depositors are requested to proceed directly to the following payout sites where they can file their claims with the PDIC representatives during office hours (8:00 AM to 5:00 PM), from Monday to Friday, except holidays.

RBTI Office/Branch	Payout Site/Address	Duration of Initial Operations
Head Office	Tangalan, Aklan, West Visayas	Feb. 3, 2006 to Feb. 17, 2006
Sigma Branch	Sigma, Capiz, West Visayas	Feb. 3, 2006 to Feb. 24, 2006

After the said date, all depositors can file their claims personally at the PDIC Claims Counter, 8th Floor, SSS BLDG, Ayala Avenue corner V.A. Rufino St., Makati City from Monday to Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. or by mail to:

The Manager
Claims Processing Department
Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation
2228 Chino Roces Avenue
1231 Makati City

- Depositors are advised to present the following requirements to the PDIC representatives when filing their claims:

- Original evidence of deposit such as Savings Passbook, Certificate of Time Deposit, or Bank Statement including Unused Checks.
- Two (2) latest valid Identification cards/documents (IDs) with depositor's signature.

Other documents may be required by the PDIC representatives in the course of their processing of claims filed.

- Pursuant to the provision of R.A. 3591, as amended by R.A. 9302, the last day for filing claims for insured deposits in the closed Rural Bank of Tangalan (Aklan) Inc., is on January 28, 2008. After January 28, 2008, PDIC, as insurer, shall no longer accept any claim for insured deposits maintained with the said closed bank.

PHILIPPINE DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION



PHILIPPINE DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION

NOTICE TO THE DEPOSITORS OF THE CLOSED MERCHANTS RURAL BANK OF TALAVERA (NUEVA ECija), INC.

Pursuant to Monetary Board Resolution No. 98 dated January 26, 2006 ordering the closure of the Merchants Rural Bank of Talavera (Nueva Ecija), Inc. (MRBTI), the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation (PDIC) will start its operations for the servicing of claims for insured deposits in the closed MRBTI on Friday, February 3, 2006.

- Depositors are requested to proceed directly to the following payout sites where they can file their claims with the PDIC representatives during office hours (8:00 AM to 5:00 PM), from Monday to Friday, except holidays.

RBTI Office/Branch	Payout Site/Address	Duration of Initial Operations
Cojuangco, Maharlika Highway Sta. Rosa, N.E.	Feb. 3, 2006 to March 1, 2006	
Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija (N.E.)	Feb. 3, 2006 to Feb. 21, 2006	
San Juan North, Nueva Ecija	Feb. 3, 2006 to Feb. 17, 2006	
City of Gapan, N.E.	Feb. 3, 2006 to Feb. 14, 2006	
T. Delos Santos St., Science City of Muñoz, N.E.	Feb. 3, 2006 to Feb. 17, 2006	
San Jose City, Nueva Ecija	Feb. 3, 2006 to Feb. 14, 2006	
Maharlika Highway, Poblacion, Talavera, N.E.	Feb. 3, 2006 to Feb. 17, 2006	
Zaragoza, Nueva Ecija	Feb. 3, 2006 to Feb. 21, 2006	

After the said date, all depositors can file their claims personally at the PDIC Claims Counter, 8th Floor, SSS BLDG, Ayala Avenue corner V.A. Rufino St., Makati City from Monday to Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. or by mail to:

The Manager
Claims Processing Department
Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation
2228 Chino Roces Avenue
1231 Makati City

- Depositors are advised to present the following requirements to the PDIC representatives when filing their claims:

- <ol

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ESTHER Marie Singson after winning the bantamweight gold in the SEAG.

SPORTS

Send us your feedback: inquirer sport name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

Honest mistake, says embattled SEAG titlist

By Musong R. Castillo

A DAY AFTER SHE WAS IDENTIFIED by a sports official as the athlete who failed a dope test, Esther Marie Singson yesterday said she committed an honest mistake and had no intention to cheat during the 23rd Southeast Asian Games, where she won a gold medal in the bantamweight division of taekwondo.

"I hope I am not judged as a cheat," Singson said in Filipino. "I never took anything with the intention to get high or to cheat."

Singson tested positive for di-

uretics, a drug used by physicians to induce urine flow on patients with hypertension and pulmonary edema and one often used by athletes to lose weight. Diuretics are banned substances because they serve as masking agents for steroids.

The drug is an ingredient in a popular herbal slimming tea which Singson took to shed off extra pounds and make the bantamweight grade for the SEA Games.

The Philippine Taekwondo Association and the University of Santo Tomas sporting community backed Singson's claims and rallied behind

the athlete, who yesterday was named Most Valuable Player in the taekwondo competitions of the UAAP, which UST swept.

"It was an honest mistake on her part," said taekwondo president Robert Aventajado, also the Philippine Olympic Committee chair. "We have to stress the fact that diuretics do not in any way affect the athlete's performance, and that she tested negative for steroids."

"We will not impose any sanction on Singson at the moment," added Aventajado over the phone. "We will wait for the decision of the WTF (World Taekwondo Federation) before taking any action. We stand by the innocence of our athlete."

Singson stands to be stripped of her gold medal and cash incen-

tives given by the government.

"I am sad at the possibility of losing my medal because I really worked hard for this," a friend quoted Singson as saying. "But I'm also thankful for the support thrown by the PIA and the UST community."

Pelicitas Francisco, deputy director of the UST Institute of Physical Education and Athletics, also backed Singson's claim, saying: "We don't believe she's capable of cheating. As far as the [Institute] is concerned, she has our full support."

IPEA director Fr. Nat de Sagun advised Singson not to shed tears over the incident, telling the athlete that "she didn't do anything intentionally wrong."

According to Aventajado, Singson admitted to having taken herbal slimming tea last October to

HONEST! A21

Air21, Ginebra stay afloat

By June Navarro

RENREN RITUALO CAN MAKE AN IMPACT FOR his team even without playing offense.

Struggling with his shots, Ritualo slowed down the spitfire James Yap instead as Air21 stayed alive in the San Mig Coffee-PEA Fiesta Conference semi-finals with a narrow 100-99 win over Purefoods last night at the Araneta Coliseum.

But it was another Yap, Roger, who blew the game away for the Giants as he fumbled after receiving a pass under the basket from Kerby Raymundo in the closing seconds.

Roger Yap had scored the three-pointer that moved Purefoods within one with 34.5 seconds remaining. Earlier, Raymundo completed a rare four-point play that brought the Giants within 96-99 with 64 seconds to go.

Ritualo, who went four of 18 from the field and

finished with 12 points, hounded James Yap going into the final stretch after the Purefoods gunner fired 11 straight points, including three triples, that brought the Giants back to life.

"I told Renren to put the cuffs on James (Yap) and give him no space to hit his shots," said Air21 coach Bo Perasol, who extended the best-of-seven series to six games.

Nursing a high fever since Game 4, Ritualo had heavy legs throughout.

"I was shaking on the court and couldn't get my rhythm," said Ritualo, last week's PBA Press Corps Player of the Week.

Shawn Daniels won his matchup with Chandler after scoring 22 points and grabbing 21 rebounds to pace the Express in their third do-or-die game in the conference.

In the second game, Rodney Santos fired 11 of his 15 points in the fourth quarter and Chris Porter

had 27 points and a conference-high 26 rebounds as Barangay Ginebra also stayed alive with a 97-83 victory over an impotent Red Bull Barako.

AIR21 100—De Ocampo 23, Daniels 22, Tabilib 15, Ritualo 12, Caneleta 8, Arboletta 8, Se 6, Ferriols 4, De Ocampo 2, Gonzales 2.

PUREFOODS 99—Yap 25, Raymundo 22, Chandler 18, Limjoot 8, Yap 8, Salvador 6, Pingris 6, Castillo 4, Billones 2, Simmon 1, Yee 0.

Quarters: 26-27 52-53, 80-80, 100-99.

GINEBRA 97—Porter 27, Mank 19, Santos 15, Macapagal 8, Adduci 8, Caguba 8, Salvacion 6, Heberbrand 6, Dimatulang 6.

RED BULL 83—Tugade 20, Fonacier 10, Cruz 10, Villanueva 10, Baguio 9, Pennisi 9, Valenzuela 7, Majorda 4, Robinson 2, Rodriguez 2, Bugia 0, Torion 0.

Quarters: 26-26, 52-54, 71-72, 97-83.

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February 6, 1:30-6 pm, 2nd Flr., Max's Rest., Glorietta 2, Ayala Ctr., Mkt.

SCHEDULE OF OTHER TOPICS (Topics may be attended separately):

Feb 8 PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT WITH RULES & UPDATES

Feb 13 HOW TO START & MANAGE A SUCCESSFUL REALTY OFFICE

Feb 15 LEGAL ASPECT OF SALE, MORTGAGE & LEASE WITH CONTRACT DOCUMENTATION AND REGISTRATION

Feb 20 JOINT VENTURES FOR REAL ESTATE PROJECTS

Feb 22 TAXATION ASPECTS OF REAL ESTATE TRANSACTIONS AND PROPERTY ASSESSMENT

Feb 27 REAL ESTATE FINANCE AND INVESTMENT ANALYSIS

Mar 1 MANAGEMENT OF RENTAL PROPERTIES

Mar 6 HOW TO'S OF REAL PROPERTY VALUATION

Mar 8 MAKING BIG MONEY IN DISTRESSED PROPERTIES

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Seahawks MVP Alexander the great's just another kid

DETROIT—THERE IS SOMEBODY WHO CAN BEAT NFL MVP Shaun Alexander at his own game.

Erik Anderson, the founder of the American Foundation for ... Chess?

Alexander said the Seattle-area entrepreneur is the last person to beat him at one of his many loves outside of American football.

"Yep, first or second week of the season.

But he got lucky," Alexander said, feigning disgust.

Alexander is at the top of his day-job profession this week, a potential Seattle Seahawks free agent, league rushing champion and NFL record holder with 28 touchdowns this season. And he is about to play in its ultimate game, Sunday's Super Bowl against Pittsburgh.

Yet chess is just one of the many sides to

Alexander most people never see.

He has a foundation in his name that focuses on leadership and character modeling for fatherless, teenage men.

"I love seeing young men go finish high school, going to college, getting married. It's a great honor to help kids do that," he said.

In many ways, the 28-year-old Alexander is a kid himself. He loves Eddie Murphy movies and puts them on one of the four

DVD players aboard the team plane for each Seahawks road trip.

He devours M&Ms just before he beats defenders on one of his many cutback runs.

There is more than pawns and bishops to Alexander's relationship with Anderson.

Anderson's nonprofit chess federation has also started a program to teach chess to grade-school children across the United States to improve critical thinking, math

and problem-solving skills.

During a recent midweek off day, Alexander was inside a children's playroom in suburban Seattle. A television camera caught him working up a sweat while rolling around on mats, dancing, clapping to music and playing miniature basketball with a small group of kids who treated him like just another playmate instead of a multimillion dollar NFL star.

AP

Lakers ride Kobe anew

Bryant torches Knicks, joins Wilt in history

NEW YORK—KOBE BRYANT IS back in Wilt Chamberlain's company again.

Kobe Bryant scored 40 points to cap one of the highest scoring months in NBA history by guiding the Los Angeles Lakers to a 130-97 thrashing of the New York Knicks at Madison Square Garden on Tuesday.

Bryant shot 7-for-17 from the floor and went to the free throw line 26 times, making 23 of those attempts, to wind up averaging 43.4 points per game for the month of January.

It was the second time Bryant had averaged more than 40 points in one month—February 2003 was the other—as the Lakers wound up taking 58 free throws and New York had their coach Larry Brown ejected.

Chamberlain is the only other player to have averaged 40 points in a month more than once and

he did it five times in his career. Elgin Baylor also averaged 40 points in a month, but only once.

Bryant's month was highlighted by a spectacular 81-point performance against the Toronto Raptors, the second highest scoring game in NBA history behind Chamberlain's 100-point effort in 1962.

With the Lakers well ahead, Bryant left the game with five and a half minutes remaining to rapturous applause from the New York fans.

"It feels good," Bryant told reporters after the game.

"It lets me know that they appreciate what I do out there on the floor."

Brown was ejected for arguing with referee Steve Javie after getting a technical foul in the third quarter following a slew of New York fouls.

In East Rutherford, New Jersey, Jason Kidd had 23 points and 12 rebounds to help the Nets snap the Detroit Pistons' NBA-best 11-game winning streak via a 91-84 win.

In Washington, Gilbert Arenas scored 20 points, and Antawn Jamison had 19 points and 18 rebounds to lead the Wizards over the Indiana Pacers, 84-79.

The Pacers lost their sixth straight game in a mostly ineffective debut for Peja Stojakovic.

Stojakovic, acquired last week from the Sacramento Kings for Ron Artest, scored 17 points on 4-for-10 shooting.

In Dallas, Dirk Nowitzki scored 21 points, the most important open 3-pointer that helped prevent a major second-half meltdown and stretching the Mavericks' season-best winning streak to nine straight via a 98-94 triumph over the Bulls.

In Sacramento, California, Ron Artest scored 19 points in his home debut, Kevin Martin added a career-high 25 and the Kings held on for their 19th straight home victory over the Denver Nuggets, 98-91.

NBA on Solar Sports; 10 a.m.—Denver vs. Utah (replay at 8 p.m.)



PUERTO PRINCESA CITY WATER DISTRICT

263 Rizal Avenue, Puerto Princesa City

Tel. Nos. 433-2408, 432-5032, 433-5802

Fax No. (48) 433-5803

The Puerto Princesa City Water District through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites suppliers/manufacturers/distributors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereinunder project:

Name of Project: Supply and Delivery of One (1) Unit Fighting Water Tanker (Japan Surplus) or equivalent

Location: Puerto Princesa City Water District

One (1) Unit Fighting Water Tanker (Japan Surplus) or equivalent, powered by 5 cylinder diesel engine, 6 whellbar, manual transmission, 6 cubic meter water tank, original Japan stainless steel equipped with standard hose with roller 900 x 200 with one spare, 8 steel bolts, brand new batteries and complete standard tools

Six Hundred Thousand Pesos (P600,000.00)

Approved Budget for the Contract: Thirty (30) Calendar Days from the receipt of the Notice to Proceed

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last 2 years with an amount of at least fifty percent (50%) of the proposed project for bidding. The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification, and Award of Contract shall be governed by pertinent provisions of R.A. 9164 and its Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR).

Activities:

1. Issuance of Bid Documents	February 6, 2006, 10:00 AM PPCWD Board Room
2. Pre-Bid Conference	February 23, 2006 10:00 AM PPCWD Board Room
3. Deadlines for Submission of Bids	February 23, 2006 10:00 AM PPCWD Board Room
4. Opening of Bids	February 23, 2006 10:00 AM PPCWD Board Room

Bid documents will be available only to prospective bidders upon payment of non-refundable amount of Five Hundred Pesos (P500.00) to the Puerto Princesa City Water District.

The Puerto Princesa City Water District assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid.

Approved by:

(Sgd.) ENGR. VICENTE D. ABREA

PPCWD BAC Chairman

(PDF-Jan 26 & Feb 2, 2006)

Riviera sweeps Alabang ladies in Fed League

Standings (Win-Draw-Loss-Games Points)

Group 1: Highlands 1-0-1-3, Orchard 1-0-1-2, Northwoods 1-0-1-2, Wack Wack 1-0-0-2, Southwoods 0-0-1-0

Group 2: Riviera 1-0-0-3, Sta. Elena 1-0-0-2, Forest Hills 0-0-1-0, Alabang 0-0-1-0

RIVIERA COMPLETED A THREE-GAME SWEEP of highly fancied Alabang in the opening matches recently of the Ladies Federation Golf League played in various courses.

Rosie Guerrero and Maripaz Domingo won in the alternate shots, Marthy del Rosario and Beth Menchavez took the high-low format and Berna Jalososo and Jungolf Cyna Rodriguez prevailed in aggregate play to pull off the big win in Riviera's debut outing.

The victory gave the Rivierans 3 points, including an extra point for the solo lead in Group 2.

Reigning champion Tagaytay Highlands split its first two games against Royal Northwoods and Wack Wack but leads Group 1 with three points.

The Highlanders first demolished Northwoods, 3-0, to earn an extra point but lost to Wack Wack in its next outing, 1-2. Jungolf Cyna Rodriguez who keyed that Wack Wack victory by making a short putt on the last hole.

Sta. Elena, last year's losing finalist, scored a 2-1 win over Forest Hills.

Vinice Godio and Shirley Romualdez won in alternate shot and Therese Dabao-Candice Yeo claimed the high-low action as Sta. Elena countered Forest Hills' Violy Pegels and Lily Young won.

Orchard and Northwoods are tied for second with Wack Wack in Group 1 after contrasting results of the tournament organized by the Federation of Golf Clubs Philippines Inc.

Northwoods of Bulacan scored a 2-1 win over Orchard, which had earlier defeated Manila Southwoods via a similar 2-1 decision.

Teams play home and away matches with their group mates with the top two teams advancing to the semifinals. The semifinalists then clash in another home-and-away series for the two slots to the finals.

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

Republic of the Philippines

Construction of Concrete Overpasses in the Provinces of Batangas and Tarlac

The Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA) through the BCDA 2006 Corporate Funds Awards to apply the corresponding sum listed hereinunder using the Approved Budget for Contract ABCI. Bids received in excess of that ABCI shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.

Name of Project	Brief Description	Approved Budget for the Contract	Source of Funds
Construction of Concrete Overpasses	Construction of the following: Logia Overpass (Tangadan-Tangadan); Parian Overpass (Tangadan-Santa Cruz, Tarlac); Macabato Overpass (Tangadan-Santa Cruz); San Roano Overpass Bridge (Batangas); Mata Overpass Bridge (Batangas)	P146,000,000.00	Corporate Funds

BCDA now calls for the presentation of Letters of Intent (LOIs) from potential Bidders to apply for the construction of Concrete Overpasses. Bidders should possess a valid PGCIB license at least AAA, with a minimum bid amount of at least 10% of the total amount of the bid amount (50% of the ABCI) and meet the other minimum eligibility requirements stated in the Eligibility Documents. Interested Bidders may submit their LOIs on 06-08 February 2006, 8:00am to 5:00pm, at BCDA Corporate Center, 2nd Bonifacio Technology Center, 31st St. cor. 2nd Ave., Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City and saucce the Eligibility Documents upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Twenty Thousand Pesos (P20,000.00). Applications for eligibility will be evaluated on a "pass/fail" basis. The last day for the submission of the accomplished Eligibility Documents shall be on the day of the opening of Eligibility Documents on 21 February 2006, 9:00AM at BCDA Corporate Center, 2nd Bonifacio Technology Center, 31st St. cor. 2nd Ave., Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City. Only those Bidders passing the Eligibility check will be entitled to purchase the Bidding Documents.

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A NPA-A of Republic Act 9164 (RA 9164) otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Act," and is restricted unless otherwise stated, to organizations with at least seventy-five percent (75%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines in accordance with RA 9164. Any Bid from a foreign Bidders Calculated and Responsible Bidders who was determined as such during post-qualification

Interested Bidders shall submit their accomplished Eligibility Documents to the BAC Secretary, BCDA Corporate Center, 2nd Bonifacio Technology Center, 31st St. cor. 2nd Ave., Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City on or before 21 February 2006, 10:00AM. Applications for the accomplishment of Eligibility Documents shall be received personally by the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. on 01 March 2006, 8:00am to 5:00pm.

BCDA will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all Eligible Bidders on 07 March 2006, 10:00am. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the Bidding Documents at the address given below on 01 April 2006.

Upon presentation of the Notice of Eligibility to the BAC Secretary, at the address given and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Fifty Thousand Pesos (P50,000.00), the Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the Bidding Documents at the address given below on 01 April 2006.

All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in any of the following form:

- a. Cash, manager's check, cashier's check, irrevocable letter of credit, or bank draft – one percent (1%) of the Approved Budget for the Contract.
- b. Bank Guarantee – one and a half percent (1.5%) of the Approved Budget for the Contract.
- c. Surety Bond from a reputable insurance company accredited by the Insurance Commission – one and half percent (2%) of the Approved Budget for the Contract.

Late Bids shall not be accepted. Bid security shall be on 10:00AM of 02 April 2006 at BCDA Corporate Center, 2nd Bonifacio Technology Center, 31st St. cor. 2nd Ave., Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who should be present at the address given on 10:00AM of 03 April 2006.

Completion of the Work is required by a term of One Hundred Twenty (120) calendar days.

BCDA reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to amend the bidding process, and to reject any Bid at any time prior to contract award without thereby incurring liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

BASES CONVERSION AND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

GEN. FRANCISCO A. BAGACIO (REF.) 2nd Floor, BCDA

BCDA Corporate Center, 2nd Bonifacio Technology Center

31st St. cor. 2nd Ave., Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City

Telephone Number: (632) 511-5555; Telfax No. (632) 514-0791

Website: www.bcdca.gov.ph

(Sgd.) VICTOR V. ZABLAN
AG. FOR SC/TEP

(PDF-Jan 24 & Feb 2, 2006)

NOTICE OF CONCERNED STOCKS AUCTION

The National Food Authority, Cagayan de Oro City (NFA-10) wishes to invite all com users to participate in the sale of Yellow Corngrains (YGN) and White Corngrains (WGN) through Auction in the following NFA-Warehouse under the jurisdiction of NFA-Bukidnon as follows:

LOT NO.	NAME OF WAREHOUSE/ LOCATION	VOLUME (in kg) MORE OR
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SPORTS



Many NSAs still shun SEC listing

THE PHILIPPINE SPORTS COMMISSION is finding ways to make life easy for the national sports associations which have yet to register with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

PSC chair Butch Ramirez yesterday admitted that there are a number of NSAs which don't have SEC registration, a major requirement in securing funds from the PSC.

"But they are our partners in sports development," said Ramirez, who sat down with the NSAs last Friday. "You don't make life difficult for your partners."

Still, the PSC chief said the NSAs must first clear their accounts with the PSC before getting fresh funds on top of having to register with the SEC.

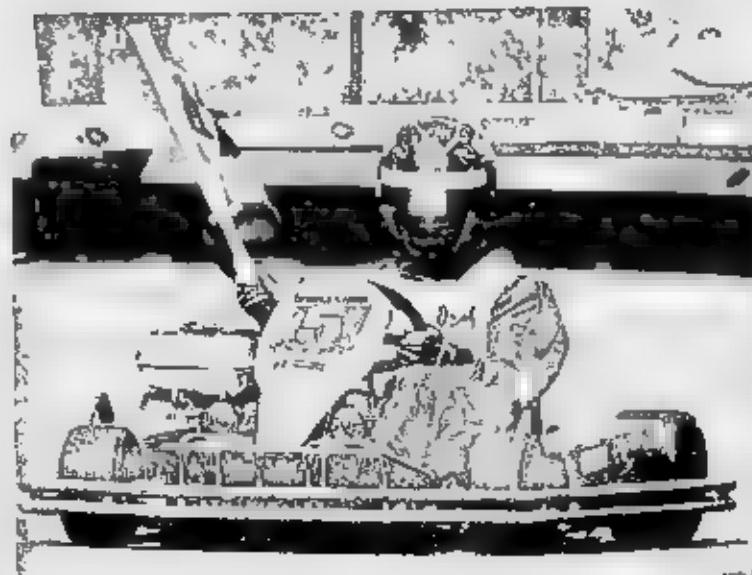
The PSC said most of the non-SEC registrants among the 44 NSAs cited possible trouble with their respective international federations, which frown on government intervention in sports.

Ramirez said he told the unregistered NSAs to just write the Commission of Audit to request for funds with arrangements for liquidation later.

Otherwise, he said the PSC would have to give out the funds directly to the athletes or make payments straight to the suppliers in case of purchase of equipment or other training aids.

The PSC-NSAs consultative meeting came on the heels of the reported P86 million uniquidated funds from last year's Southeast Asian Games training.

Marc Anthony Reyes



TYSON Sy waves the checkered flag for the Altronics-WL Team.

Altronics-WL wins; Sy is fastest driver

ALTRONICS-WL BESTED SEVEN other teams in the Manila Speedzone 24 Hours Endurance Kart Race 2006 held Jan. 28 to 29 at the Manila Speedzone track, Bonifacio Global City in Taguig.

The Eson Carpio-managed Altronics-WL, which was captained by Formula 3 sensation Tyson Sy and composed of AP3 champion Pepon Marave, Albert Lagman, Jonathan Dael, James Co, Niño Espinosa, David Palma, Michael Palmery, Jeff de Vera, Joji Melchor, Eugene Okuda and Raymund Ronquillo, logged a total of 1,464 laps.

Sy, who started for the team and drove for 3 hours and 26 minutes, built up a lead of eight laps and clinched the fastest driver award with a time of 55.503 seconds.

Defending champion Team

Bridgestone, managed by Steven Tagle and featuring star karters Marlon Stockinger, Stefano Marcelo, John Marcelo, Marlon Stockinger, Mark Bumgarner, Philip Alvendia, Jeff Reyes, Marc Tagle, Gino Ongpanco, Marty Aguilar, Ivan Casper and Indy Villalon, placed second with a total of 1,449 laps.

Third place went to PLDT-Nokian AF3, which was led by internationalist Angelo Barreto, Alistair Jackson, Juha Roina, Timo Koponen, Esa Antrenen and AP3 guns Dado Peria, Mark Goddard, John OHara, and Edgen Dy-Liacco, with 1,416 laps.

The event was sponsored by Bridgestone, Denso, Castrol, Addict Mobile, PLDT myDSL, WL Foods, Asian Spirit, Canon, Pharmaton, Makok, Nestle, Red Bull, Edge Consulting and Airborne Access.

Defending champion Team

Wizards, Painters title series begins

Coaches: Players commitment is key



GARCIA

BANAL

Magnolia appeared to be the more dominant team in their two elimination encounters. The Wizards routed the Painters, 74-57, in their first match. The Painters evened up matters but barely edged the Wizards, 69-68.

But for Banal, the previous games are no longer relevant.

The top-ranked Elasto Painters are riding high on a seven-game streak, the longest winning run thus conference.

"They have the advantage because of their championship experience and their run during the elimination round," noted Banal.

Jay-R Tangay, a strong candidate for the Most Valuable Player plum, has been leading the Painters' offensive charge although he was side-

lined with a knee injury in their last outing.

Garcia, though, isn't worried because he has enough able bodies to turn to lead by block-shot leader Jay-R Reyes, veterans Marvin Ortiguela and Eugene Tan, and young gunners Romay Enrile and Jun Cabatu.

Aside from Santos and Williams, the Wizards are also loaded with clutch performers including Jeff Chan, RJ Rizada, Kim Valenzuela and Marc Isip.

Both the Wizards and the Painters are coming off tough semifinal rounds. Magnolia narrowly escaped Granny Goose in two consecutive double-overtime games, while Rain or Shine also figured in two tight matches versus Harbour Centre.

Jasmine W. Payo

UAAP to meet on La Salle cage leave

By Jasmine W. Payo

LA SALLE'S DECISION TO SKIP one basketball season has prompted the UAAP board yesterday to set an emergency meeting on Feb. 8 to discuss the unprecedented move.

La Salle earlier filed a one-year leave of absence from the men's basketball tournament in an attempt to rebuild its cage program rocked by the eligibility scandal involving Archers Mark Benitez and Tim Gatchalian.

Problems could arise, however, since a league rule states that a member school cannot pull out of one of two compulsory sports: basketball and volleyball.

The UAAP board already assured that it would soon put a closure on the case when its fact-finding committee submits its decision and recommendations by the end of the month.

Suspension is among the possible sanctions the league could impose, with some league representatives citing some similarities

with the Adamson basketball scandal involving Marlou Aquino 12 years ago.

The league suspended the Falcons from all sports in the 1994 season for fielding Aquino in the seniors tournament despite academic deficiencies.

Board representatives, though,

have begged off from commenting on the La Salle issue since "it could preempt the findings" of the five-man investigating panel.

The committee has summoned key personalities for interview to

shed light on the case.

Aside from the planned pull-out, La Salle has offered to return its 2004 championship trophy after announcing last October that it unknowingly fielded two ineligible players for three years.

Benitez and Gatchalian submitted fake certificates of their Philippine Educational Placement Test, an exam taken in lieu of a high school diploma, to gain entry in La Salle. Both played for the 2004 champion Archers.

SPORTSWATCH

Olympian archer laid to rest

OLYMPIAN ARCHER CARLOS "JUN" S. SANTOS JR. OF PASIG CITY, PASSED away last Friday at the age of 66. He was survived by his wife Rita; children Chato Winnie and Roy, Jean and Joseph, and Gian; grandchildren Benjo, Jole and Iana; brothers and sisters Isagani and Virginia, Epigenia and Agripina, Efren and Emma (deceased), Francisco and Salvacion, Emesto (+) and Lourdes, Hermosa and Manuel and Ernesta and Bobby; relatives and friends. He was laid yesterday at the Manila Memorial Park. Santos competed in the 1972 Munich Olympics.

27 entries lead Riligan derby

TWENTY-SEVEN COCKERS, WITH TWO WINS EACH, ARE THE EARLY PACESETTERS in Riligan Mega Cockpit's 16th Anniversary 6-cock derby which began Monday. Host Riligan said total entries ballooned to a record 429. The second round of eliminations will start at 2 p.m. today, with 116 fights lined up. Among the qualifiers were Randy Rodelio (Mavison), Jeff Dumalaog (Dumas Pride), Ed Patzawaran of Bulacan (EMP 1 and II), Allan Chan (MC AC Wild Wings), Art de Castro (Obando Warriors), Romero Yu (Roxy Loyalty Bet), Ronald Manalansan (RM 526), Noel Tan (Batang Kalye), Butot Booc (Tata Boob) and Jun Mangura (Vrijun VZ). Guaranteed prize is P4 million and a brand new Toyota Innova will be given to the fastest win champion. For inquiries, call 851-2273, 833-1638 and 852-9812.

Top cockers join Pacquiao derby

THIRTY-FIVE PROMINENT COCKERS HAVE PLEDGED THEIR SUPPORT TO boxing icon Manny Pacquiao, who is co-sponsor of the Pacquiao Big Event 8-cock derby on Feb. 6 and 8 at San Juan Coliseum with Sagapua Complexor 3000 as sponsor. Entered are Patrick Antonio, Jun Topacio and his American partner Gene Batia of Mississippi, Gov. Chavit Singson, Representatives Gerry "Boy" Espria, Butch Pitach and Jing Paras, Pol Estrellado, Benito Lim, Mayor Dennis Pineda, Jinggo Brothers, Jet Fernando, Gov. Ito Ynaris, Rey Briones, Nene Abella, Boy Rojo, Max and Bebot Roxas, Dicky Lim and Boy de Roca. Participants are requested to attend the welcome party for Pacquiao tomorrow at Shangri-La Hotel-Edsa. For details, contact 0917-8041691 (Ariel)

Poker prize; Southern Ladies challenge

SPECTATOR



Al S. Mendoza

I DIDN'T KNOW THE CHAMPION OF THE Philippine Poker Tour/Hold'em Championship will pocket P1 million. Wow! Hey, Pareng Rey (Gamboa), why didn't you tell me?

Rey, of course, is the organizer of the event set April 8-9 at the airport's Casino Filipino in Paranaque.

Rey tells me venues for the qualifying events are still open and details can be had by calling 817-9092 or 812-0153.

"Not only will the champ pocket P1 million," Rey says. "He will also win the champion's gold bracelet. That's the equivalent of the Green Jacket for the Masters champion in golf."

Oh, well, the prizes—they're a steal really!

I only get to watch poker on Solar Sports. And it's really a thrill watching celebrities play it. One time, I saw Dennis Rodman, a teammate of Michael Jordan when the Chicago Bulls won six NBA titles in the Nineties, play poker. As usual, he was fun to watch.

I usually play poker only in December, during breaks of my coverage of the Fil-Am Golf Invitational in Baguio City. My poker mates include Des Bautista, Art Ng, Gov. Rocky Molañas, Roger B. Flores, Jake E. Ayson, Tabby Tabanag and Florencio Campomanes.

One day when I'm not too busy, I'll try joining your tournament, Rey.

Sure, more than the fun, the chance of having a crack at your P1 million is a come-on like no other.

Catch you later, Rey.

I am glad that kids like Mia Piccio and Crystal

whose baton the Southern Ladies has had glorious years—then and now.

"We will not stop staging this tournament because it has been proven that this event is a factory for future stars of the game," says Alice, who could sit with her wealth just listening to Billie Holiday and Barbra Streisand but has elected to nurse the tournament that's been with us for the last 43 years.

Name it, and they've played in the Southern Ladies at least once or twice. Jennifer Rosales, Ruby Chico, Yvette de Leon, Mary Grace Estrella, Jamille Jose, Sonja Tugot, Jayvie Agojo, Frances Bondad, Heidi Chua, Carmelita Villaroman, Lina de Guzman, Lora Roberto, Grace Ebalde. And a slew more whose names escape my mind at the moment. All champions.

I had wished to see Agojo play and defend her crown she won last year at Pueblo de Oro in Cagayan de Oro City. But her studies at Pepperdine University in Los Angeles prevented her from coming.

So with Frances Bondad, the 2005 Philippine ladies champion, who studies in Sydney, Australia.

I also had wished to see Debbie de Villa play. But the reigning Philippine Ladies Open champion was also stymied by her schooling.

How I wished we could someday see schools granting leniency to students with potentials to gain honors for the country through sports.

That will, indeed, be the day.

Comments to menju@pldtatl.net

Southern Ladies gets going at Del Monte

THE 43RD SOUTHERN LADIES

Open unfolds today with prospects of another spirited battle high among members of the national pool and a slew of talented players, including three junglers, at the Del Monte Golf Club in Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon.

Anya Tanpinco, Carmelita Villaroman and Lora Roberto of Manila Southwoods head the cast in the centerpiece championship division, which also features teeners Crystal

Superal,

The other player to watch is Lina de Guzman of Canlubang, who is out to rule the three-day event after winning it in 2003.

Meanwhile, Mizuno is staking a brand-new Mizuno Comp. CT golf set as hole-in-one prize on No. 16, according to the organizing National Golf Association of the Philippines (NGAP).

Tanpinco, Roberto and Villaroman, all internationalists and many-time members of the nation-

al squad, are expected to fight it out

for the top plum with Superal, Piccio and Rodriguez fancied to carry the cudgels for the youth brigade.

Spruced up to championship condition, the par-72 course is likewise expected to provide a different kind of challenge for the field with its rolling layout and unpredictable putting surface.

Also on tap in the event, sponsored by Petron Corp., DHL Worldwide Express/WWW Express, Gopez Corp. and Hans Brulmann

Intl. Jeweler, are the classification tournaments with fabulous prizes at stake.

Aside from Manila Southwoods, other clubs competing in the tournament, backed by Philippine Sports Commission, DPC Yellow Pages, U-Bix and Rep. Constantino Jaraula of Cagayan de Oro, are Abang-Abo, Canlubang, Cebu, Rivera, Sta. Elena, Orchard Valley, Pueblo de Oro, Villamor, Lanang, Davao, Navy, Iligan and host Del Monte.

From page A19

shed off two pounds and make the bantam limit of 55 kg for the SEAG.

That brand of slimming tea contained a huge amount of diuretics to make those who take it urinate their excess weight away.

But diuretics are banned by the World Anti-Doping Agency (Wada) because of their ability to mask steroids, a performance-enhancing drug.

Dr. Raul Carles, according to Aventajado, had conducted drug tests on all Filipino athletes last Nov. 22 which the whole taekwondo team passed. Problem was, the procedure did not check the athletes for the

presence of diuretics in their systems.

The Wada website confirms the regulation on the use of diuretics. Wada also listed several reasons to issue a Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE) on the use of the drug—losing weight not being one of them.

Only those with illnesses or documented medical conditions can avail of the TUE and Singson does not fall under any of the categories.

Incidentally, a Malaysian who won the karate-do silver, also stands to lose her medal for also failing the drug test. Details of this case were also not revealed.

The final verdict on both cases will be known when the SEAG Federation meets in March in Malaysia.



TATAP PREXY: POC president Jose "Pepito" Cojuangco (left) swears in Victor Valbuena as Table Tennis Association of the Philippines president during the recent induction rites at the Milly Way Restaurant in Makati City. Also sworn in were Freddie Jalasco, vice president; Dante Boqueron, secretary general; Johanna Alvarez, deputy secretary general and treasurer; Rufino Go, chair emeritus; Police Supt. Cesar Hawthorne Bine, auditor; Denise Marie Lacson, public relations and marketing officer and Glen Merete, corporate secretary.

Honest mistake...

From page A19

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Star: Bimbo Cerrudo
Guest: Karla Gutierrez
Venues: Conservatory The Peninsula Manila (Feb. 11), Sarabia Manor and Convention Center in Iloilo (Feb. 13) and Sugarnland Hotel in Bacolod (Feb. 14)

When you're not doing a concert, how do you celebrate Valentine's Day?

We usually have dinner and then watch a show.

What's the most romantic Valentine's Day you ever experienced?

When Miche Legrand performed at the

PICC. We didn't want to be late, so we had KFC takeout in the parking lot.

What's your dream Valentine's date?
Special dinner at home, then drinks until sunrise

Do you have a fantasy date?

That would be a group date with famous couples from different fields and eras. Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, Juan and Evita Peron, Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie. My wife and I will complete the "eightsome."

What's the most romantic love song?
"Where Do I Begin?" from the movie "Love Story"—my all-time favorite

If you were not doing your own show, who

would you watch?

Andy Williams, because he'll most probably sing "Where Do I Begin?"

Why should we watch your show?

All my shows have a beneficiary (CRIBS on Feb. 11; the White Cross Children's Home on Feb. 13; St. Scholastica's Bacolod Alumnae Foundation on Feb. 14). So you will be supporting worthy causes as well. I will be accompanied by the RSVP String Ensemble. I promise to sing songs that people of all ages can relate to—including love themes from the musicals and the movies, standards, classical-pop crossover and light opera.

Bayani San Diego Jr.



BIMBO

I WAS INVITED TO JOIN

"Pinoy Big Brother Celebrity Edition." That surprise call really started my new year with a big bang! I was tempted to say yes but I declined. Some friends volunteered to take my place. My kids prodded me to join. Was I crazy for passing up on this chance of a lifetime? Hmm, let's just say that there are some things I can't do without for 45 days (make a wild guess). Besides, I'm one person who can't be contained. I can't picture myself being cooped up in one place for a long period of time—not even with a significant other—though I could probably change my mind if Brad Pitt were one of the housemates.

I asked some celebrity friends who they wouldn't mind being locked up for PBB. Sunshine Cruz chose Kris Aquino, saying, "For sure I won't get bored 'cause Kris never runs out of kwento."

Assunta de Rossi picked Rica Peralejo, Nikki Valdez and her sis Alex. "Girl power karo sa loob!"

Christine Reyes would like her co- "Starstruck" pals Christian Esteban and Jade Lopez to be with her. "They are my best friends," Christine said. "I wouldn't mind being stuck with them on an island!"

Dina Bonnevie was clueless. "Sorry, I've been too busy with corporate stuff," she said. "I'm not familiar with [PBB]."

(Indeed, after celebrating her birthday at Merks last Friday, Ms D flew to the United States for business matters.)

I suddenly wondered who the celebrities in PBB would be. The series starts on Saturday. Had I agreed to join, who would I be under house arrest with?

I snooped around and found out that some of the stars most likely to be confined in Big Bro's house are: Chin Chin Gutierrez, Rustom Padilla, Keana Reeves, John Pratts, Bianca Gonzalez and Rosanna Roces. What an interesting mix

(See boxed story below.)

My imagination went wild. Consider this scenario: Chin Chin, known for her unusual ways of com-

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6 celebrities like

DOLLYWOOD

Dolly Ann Carvaljal

CHIN-CHAN

list of celebs has not been d

"We'll defi- day," said Dyn losing sleep weeks over celebrity par Dyogi, wh become as poji TV show mates it prod said it woul about four m season of PBB

But the ca Celebrity Ed the first weeking Dyogi bar ensemble 14 p fields of enter and politics

The show the tens on housemates

Tougher house rules,

By Nini Valera

A SENATE SEX SCANDAL whistle-blower. A one-legged athlete. A single mother. A teenage heartthrob. A former matinee idol. A triple gold medalist in the recent SEA Games. A radio deejay. A fashion designer.

These are just some of the celebrities who have made it to the short list of the celebrity edition of Pinoy Big Brother, which will be launched on Saturday, Feb. 4.

The winning housemate will receive a cool P1-million in cash. The winner will also choose a charity to which another million pesos will be donated, according to Direk Lauren Dyo, business unit manager.

But as of Tuesday, the final

Banking on shock

MAURY POVICH IS TURNING out to be the "C-D" program host on the new Second Avenue cable channel.

His talk-variety show features women who subject men to DNA tests to determine whether they're the fathers of the children they've irresponsibly sired.

This gets a big reaction from C-D viewers, due to the attendant anger, physical and verbal violence, tears, and shock and awe factor.

But it turns out that Povich's show has more hot irons in the fire than we initially thought.

The next time we caught it, he was featuring incredible escapes from danger. Well, that was much less shocking than the DNA paternity test circus, so OK.

Then, Povich did a limited series on spectacular car crashes. After the sixth stupendous collision, we were wide-eyed from boredom. Don't they know when to stop?

Only after a few more telecasts did we get the major draft of Povich's show. It features unusually people whose similarly extreme experiences are caught on tape.

"Caught on Tape," that is, in fact, is the subtitle for the show's great variety of features.

And, the more unusual, the better.

What about neighbors who beat each other up? Store owners who have to fend off armed robbers? Stars caught without their make-up on and fighting with paparazzi?

The show is open to all sorts of extreme compilations of experiences recorded by home video or even phone cameras, as long as they get a primal surge

out of viewers

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Povich's show 26), it featur- putting guests who were be- nant, despite t

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Applicants

Metro Manila

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AINMENT

eely to answer Big Brother's call

muning with nature, will try to talk some sense into the worldly Keanna. The self-confessed "escort girl" will collide with the loquacious Osang. A battle of the boobs and boo-boos is sure to ensue between these sexy mommas.

Rustom has long been haunted by rumors that he's gay. Stripped of all inhibitions, will Rustom's stay in the PBB house finally make his true colors, whatever they are, show? For sure, John will be the younger counterpart of PBB's most famous ex-housemate Sam Milby. How will Bianca cope with lovesickness while she's away from her "l'amour," Direk Lino Cayetano? That's just half of the story. Six other celebs will have to complete the daring dozen (plus two more, I heard).

Had I accepted the PBB invite, I would enjoy brushing up on my French with Chin Chin ... have a good laugh with Rustom reminiscing about my dangerous liaison with his brother Binoo ... grill Keanna for more juicy info about her shady past ... perhaps turn into a "pedophile" and go ga-ga over John (hehe) ... swap girly anecdotes with Bianca ... and try very hard to stay out of Osang's hair. But I'll definitely be evicted right away 'cause I'll be dying to write about the experience and share every gory detail here in Dollywood.

Wonder if you would miss my column for a month and a half if I joined Pinoy Big Brother? Please say yes, so I wouldn't regret not joining after all.

Rockstedy

Band fever heats up once again. The scene promises to be more exciting with the entry of another band—Rockstedy. The group consists of Teddy Corpuz (vocals), Christian Sandico (bass), Jovi Ramos (guitars/back-up vocals), Joven Pelungon (lead guitar) and Jeff Cucullo (drums). They have just released their debut album "Tsubatagalidakeyn" under 12 Stone Records, distributed by Sony BMG. The album features Tagalog songs on love and relationships, with "Lagi Mo na lang akong Dimedde-me" as carrier single.

challenges and tasks

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glush or Tagalog, and eager to assist in the foundation's projects related to TV literacy, the promotion of TV users' rights, and the selection of family-friendly programs.

A brief biodata with photo and contact phones can be sent to Anak TV Volunteers, 82 Dr. Lazcano St., Laging Handa, QC. An orientation will be conducted for accepted volunteers prior to posting of assignments.

The volunteers' hours logged can be credited as practicum work or on-the-job training. The exposure enables volunteers to work with TV executives and actors who are part of the foundation's advocacy.

Students and graduates of arts and letters should find the volunteer work stimulating and fulfilling.

On Cartoon Network

At 3 p.m. on Valentine's Day, Feb. 14, catch the network's visuals suspects ham it up in the name of love in "Truly, Madly, Dorily." At 3:30 p.m., one of the girls falls for a guy from the other side of the tracks in "The Powerpuff Girls."

At 4 p.m., Johnny Bravo could find love at last. At 4:30 p.m., "The Ed, Edd N Eddy's Valentine's Day special."

At 5 p.m., "A Scooby-Doo Valentine." At 5:30 p.m., Mac and Boo develop surprising crushes on Frankie in "Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends."

At 6 p.m., "Codename: Kids Next Door" holds a social. Finally, at 6:30 p.m., on "The Grim Adventures of Billy and Mandy," the two lead characters spend Valentine's Day with a love-lorn Grim.

unteers

Asian Foundation and Television is ants for Anak TV until Feb. 17. could be based in at least 18 years senior college stu- graduates, free to the country on their articulate in En-



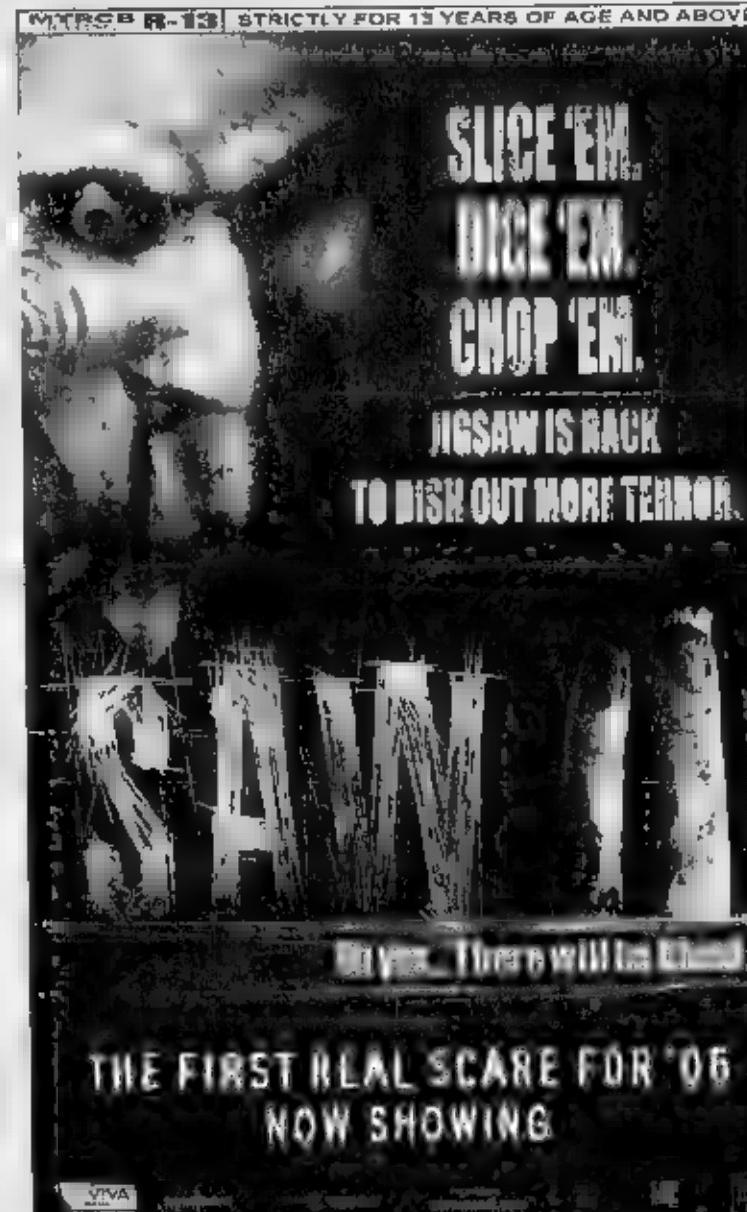
Oro's new star

Make way for Sheila Mae. She's Oro Music's first female artist. Her music is pop rock and contemporary. Check out her CD, which consists of 12 original songs including the carrier single "Buwalong." Sheila Mae is set to go on mall tours nationwide. Her album will be distributed in the US and Canada by Oro Records, based in New Jersey.

Personal

Happy birthday to a woman who's beautiful, inside out—Tati Fortuna! Birthday Cheers to my lovable kapitid, Robert Espinosa. Birthday hugs to my putangga, who's the only one qualified to write my life story—Ian Reyno. Birthday greetings to my long lost "guardian angel" Russa Carpio and my "elder sis" whom I miss, Emma San Juan.

(E-mail: wateringsholeshangrila@yahoo.com)



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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2006

SM CINEMA

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SA LAHAT NG GUSTONG YUMAMAN
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1 LITTLE MANHATTAN	1 RESERVED
1 DON'T GIVE UP ON US	1 RESERVED
1 DERAILLED	1 RESERVED
1 BLOODRAYNE	1 RESERVED
SM CITY BIRTHGAS	
1 DON'T GIVE UP ON US	1 RESERVED
1 ZATHURA	1 RESERVED
1 DERAILLED	1 RESERVED
1 RUMOR HAS IT	1 RESERVED
SIASAYAS AND MINDANAO	
1 SM CITY CIBU	1 RESERVED
1 NARNIA	1 RESERVED
1 UNDERWORLD 2	1 RESERVED
1 DERAILLED	1 RESERVED
1 LITTLE MANHATTAN	1 RESERVED
1 HALF LIGHT	1 RESERVED
1 THE MAID	1 RESERVED
1 DON'T GIVE UP ON US	1 RESERVED
1 ZATHURA	1 RESERVED
SM CITY DAVAO	
1 DERAILLED	1 RESERVED
1 ST. ANGE	1 RESERVED
1 ZATHURA	1 RESERVED
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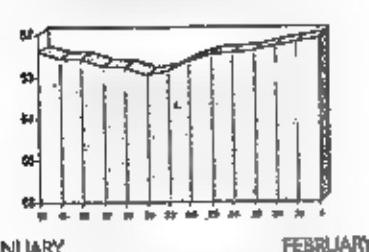
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Peso seen breaching 51:\$1 mark

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



PESO-DOLLAR RATE

P 52.09 = \$ 1

As of 5 p.m., Feb. 1, 2006

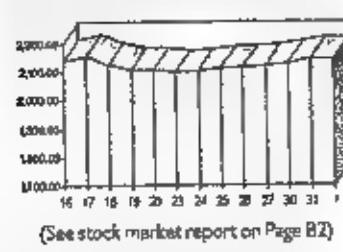
Y 117.34 = \$ 1

As of 5 p.m., Feb. 1, 2006

GOLD: \$558.20-\$550.70

per ounce Hong Kong, Jan. 27, 2006

STOCK MARKET



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Shares close flat

SHARE PRICES CLOSED FLAT YESTERDAY amid profit-taking on select blue chips, in a performance which mirrored trade elsewhere in the region, dealers said.

They said investors were still digesting an overnight rate hike in the United States, and the possibility that there could be more to come, while the local profit taking was not unexpected in light of recent gains.

Gains in Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) and Metrobank, however, helped offset losses elsewhere.

The composite index ended down 1.87 points at 2,143.52 after trading between

SHARES/B2

Currency rallies to 3-year high of 52.05

By Doris C. Dumiao

FOREIGN BUYING OF LOCAL STOCKS, SOFTENING oil prices and better credit-rating prospects for the country strengthened the peso further to a three-year high of 52.05 before closing at 52.09 to the dollar.

The 52.09:\$1 closing rate yesterday was the currency's strongest finish since ending at 52.05 on May 12, 2003.

"There's positive sentiment toward the VAT implementation and corporate demand for dollars is thin," said Roland Avante, treasurer at Chinatrust Commercial Bank Philippines.

The peso opened at 52.10 and hit an intra-day low of 52.125 before closing. Value traded stood at \$448 million at the Philippine Dealing System. After several roadblocks, the government increased the VAT rate from 10 to 12

percent starting Feb. 1 as part of the VAT reform program, the single fiscal measure needed to shore up the government's budget position.

The first phase of the reform program was fleshed out last year with the repeal of certain exemptions.

The currency was likewise supported by prospective inflows for the P8.5-billion initial public offering of First Generation Holdings.

Avante said another favorable factor working for the local currency was the easing of oil prices.

"At a price of \$67.68 a barrel, oil companies need to source



ALI HOMESTARTER BOND LAUNCHED

Ayala Land Inc. president Jim Ayala (third from left) confers with ALI treasurer Augusto Bengzon (leftmost), BPI Capital Corp. president Natividad Alejo, and ALI senior vice president for corporate sales and marketing Rex Mendoza during the recent launch of Homestarter Bond. An ALI pioneering initiative, the bond is aimed at helping prospective homeowners build up funds for down payment of homes offered by the company and its subsidiaries, Community Innovations and Avida. BPI Capital Corp. is the designated issue manager of the Homestarter Bond that involves investments of P5,000 to P25,000 for three years with a 5-percent non-compounding interest a year. Offer period ends on Feb. 14.

Lopez firm teams up with Marubeni on power ventures

By Abigail L. Ho

THE LOPEZ FAMILY'S FIRST GEN CORP has signed a memorandum of understanding with Marubeni Corp. on the possibility of forming a joint venture firm that will acquire non-gas power generation assets.

Under the MOU, the two parties will discuss the possibility of establishing an entity that will purchase non-gas power facilities that the state-owned National Power Corp., Philippine National Oil Co. and PNOOC Energy Development Corp. will be placing on the auction block.

FGRI is currently evaluating four po-

The joint venture will also look into the acquisition of certain privately owned power generation facilities.

According to First Gen's prospectus for its initial public offering, these non-gas power facilities will supply electricity to malls, hospitals, hotels and industrial estates.

Aside from its 1,000-megawatt (MW) Sta. Rita and 500-MW San Lorenzo natural gas-fired power facilities in Batangas, the company is also involved in renewable energy through First Gen Renewables Inc.

tential sites in Mindanao for the construction of run-of-river mini-hydro power plants.

These projects are estimated to deliver a combined capacity of 25 MW.

The firm likewise plans to conduct wind power resource assessments in four potential wind sites in Luzon and the Visayas. These assessments may be done on its own or in cooperation with nongovernment organizations, developers or equipment manufacturers.

Aside from the acquisition of non-gas power assets and the development of more renewable energy resources, First

Gen is also exploring the possibility of entering other energy-related fields, particularly the fuel logistics business.

This will involve the development and construction of liquefied natural gas import terminals, petroleum tanker chartering, and oil pipeline management.

The firm is supervising the operations of affiliate First Philippine Industrial Corp., which transports the petroleum products of Petronas Shell Petroleum Corp. and Caltex Philippines Inc., from Batangas to their Metro Manila depots.

BMW Philippines re-engineered.



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To Mr. Lito Tengco, All The Best On Your Birthday!

Singapore firm gets perks

By Rommel W. Domingo

THE BOARD OF INVESTMENTS HAS granted incentives to a Singaporean firm's P118.5-million project to make, buy and sell in the country a new generation of parts for cars, buses, trucks and motorcycles.

Data from the BOI showed that Philippine Auto Components Inc., 97.3 Singaporean and 2.7 percent Japanese-owned, will operate in Carmelray Industrial Park in Laguna, a facility that can produce 400,000 sets of instruments and 350,000 units of parts a year.

Among the products that PACI will make are radiators, fuel pumps, and

instrument clusters made of various kinds of meters and gauges, like speedometers and tachometers, as well as fuel and temperature gauges.

The firm will also put up a new production line to manufacture instrument clusters and related parts, like dials, printed circuit boards and cases for motor vehicles.

PACI's project will create 126 new jobs, and all products are geared for the export market.

In a related development, Subic economic zone top exporter Wistron Infocomm (Philippines Corp.) was granted tax and other incentives for an expansion project.

A BOI document showed that the

company based in Taiwan was laying out about P43.4 million to establish centers of excellence as well as facilities for testing and servicing electronic products.

The centers will provide training for upgrading workers' skills, while the facilities will provide services like repairing and upgrading defective electronic products.

Wistron's latest investment at the Subic Bay Industrial Park in Zambales will generate 158 new jobs.

A local unit of Wistron Corp., the company is engaged in the manufacture of motherboards and laptop computer units, as well as computer peripherals and fax machines.

Favor of the month

BREAKTIME



Conrado R. Banal III

For one, the "takeover" will dilute the holdings of the SSS and the GSIS from the present 43 percent (in Equitable PCI) to just about 20 to 22 percent (in BDO). ***

ANOTHER infuriating issue is the pricing.

The SM group offer means that the holdings of SSS and GSIS in Equitable PCI are valued at less than P60 a share.

In comparison, GSIS president and general manager Winston Garcia has a foreign buyer at P92 a share.

All of a sudden, reports burned the news wires last week that the SM group was, er, "extending" the deadline.

Two groups in the majority bloc in Equitable PCI—the pension fund GSIS and Trans Middle East—pooh-poohed that odious offer from the start.

Only the pension fund SSS, through its boss Corazon dela Paz, indicated to media that it would think about the offer. And what was there to think about—how to bilk the 18 million or so SSS members, whose P20 billion worth of blood, sweat and tears are rotting in Equitable PCI?

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If YOU were Dela Paz, the first thing you'd ask yourself is, will the SM group offer be good for the SSS members?

The answer is simple. It is out-and-out shameless.

Whadayano, reports now say that the SSS already favors the merger. Oh yeah, in return for what kind of, er, "favor."

I mean, really, somebody in public office can be that brazen, huh?

Together, you see, the government-run GSIS and SSS now control about 43 percent of Equitable PCI. This can command a handsome premium when they unload their investments in the bank for cash. Again—that's hard CASH!

And guess what the pension funds, particularly SSS, need most nowadays. Under Dela Paz, the SSS never increased the benefits of its members, who, by the way, mostly belong to the working class.

UNDER the "merger," which is actually a "takeover" in disguise, the SSS and the GSIS will be locked in, perhaps for good.

Our pension funds then will get BDO stocks. Thus, we still have some pieces of paper.

Believe me, nobody in his right mind will want to buy the BDO stocks from the SSS and the GSIS.

AND the beauty of it all is, the SSS is in favor of the SM group's proposal.

I don't know if it's because Dela Paz has been out of the country most of the time so much so that she probably wants to keep her job. What price must she pay? Is it to deliver Equitable PCI to the SM group at the expense of 18 million SSS members?

After all, she seems to be getting help from another SSS nominee in the Equitable PCI board named Fulgencio Factoran Jr., who is not even connected with the SSS management. What is he doing representing us, SSS members, in the bank?

They just don't get it, do they? Their job is to protect the interest of the SSS members. Not the interest of SM group!

Paging congressmen and senators, perhaps this calls for an investigation. That's the public's P20 billion these guys are playing with here.

Peso seen ... From page B1

about \$100 million from the spot market in a month. At only \$65/barrel, this will go down to \$60-\$70 million, a demand that can easily be absorbed by the market," Avante said.

But while the momentum was positive and the peso was now heading toward the 51:\$1, Avante said the lower peso-dollar exchange rate was creating demand.

"We haven't seen the peso at low 52 levels for a long time, so those who are not so optimistic are now hunting for bargains. They are buying dollars at these levels," Avante said.

On the other hand, analysts expect equities to outperform fixed-income securities this year, which means that the local currency's appreciation would depend more on equity flows.

"The US treasuries are declining in price but our comparative benchmark is not moving so the spread is declining," Avante said, noting why local debt paper would likely become less attractive.

Analysts from ING agreed that the double-digit returns on peso bonds seen last year would not be possible to replicate this year.

Paul Joseph Garcia, ING Philippines chief investment officer, said peso bonds would likely yield only 8-10 percent net after tax while local equities could top last year's return of 15 percent. "This year, we're looking at 15-20 percent (return rate for the Philippine Stock Exchange composite index). Our view on valuation is still cheap," Garcia said.

Meanwhile, Avante said the market would be very disappointed if the Philippines would not get an upgrade in its credit-rating outlook from major rating agencies. He said most investors had priced an improvement in the ratings and that a change in the outlook from "negative" to "stable" might not be enough.

Our pension funds then will get BDO stocks. Thus, we still have some pieces of paper.

Believe me, nobody in his right mind will want to buy the BDO stocks from the SSS and the GSIS.

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PUBLIC NOTICES

NOTICE OF LOSS

BUSINESS

Gov't seen reviewing medium-term targets

Factoring in rising oil prices, other developments

By Michelle V. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT MIGHT REVIEW ITS macro-economic targets under the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) to see if they were still realistic given the below-the-target gross domestic product growth last year, the country's chief economist said.

The economy, measured in terms of GDP, last year grew by only 5.1 percent, or off the MTPDP target of between 5.3 and 6.3 percent.

Economic authorities blamed the sharp rise in global oil prices and the El Niño weather problem, which cut agricultural production, for the country's failure to meet the growth target.

"We may have to study the MTPDP targets by mid-2007 to factor in current developments," said Augusto Santos, director general of the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda).

MTPDP is the blueprint of the national government's development agenda for 2005 to 2010, outlining macro-economic targets and programs.

The GDP growth targets under the MTPDP are as follow: 5.3 to 6.3 percent in 2005, 6.3 to 7.3 percent in 2006; 6.5 to 7.5 percent in

2007; 6.8 to 7.8 percent in 2008, and 7 to 8 percent in 2009 and 2010.

Observers said the MTPDP targets seemed optimistic. The Asian Development Bank, for instance, had projected that the Philippines' economic growth would likely be about 5 percent from 2005 to 2007.

The target of between 5.3 and 6.3 percent for 2005 was based on the assumption of a robust farm output growth and a vibrant services sector, to be boosted by the booming business process outsourcing (BPO) industry.

The country also missed the export growth target set under the MTPDP for 2005.

The National Statistical Coordination Board earlier reported that the country's merchandise exports grew by a meager 2.3 percent last year, way off the 10-percent goal set under the MTPDP.

The weak performance of the export sector was blamed largely on the decline in the global demand for electronics, which accounted for about 70 percent of the country's total exports.

Economists said the poor demand for electronics was due to high oil prices which forced con-

sumers to cut down on spending for items that were not considered basic.

The MTPDP set the country's annual export growth targets as follows: 10 percent for 2005 and 2006; 11 percent for 2007; 12 percent for 2008; 14 percent for 2009, and 13 percent for 2010.

Despite the country's failure to meet the export growth target of 10 percent last year, the Neda said the government was keeping for now the 10-percent growth target for 2006 until the review of the MTPDP goals next year.

Because of the volatility of demand for electronics, the Neda said it was pushing for the diversification of the country's exports. In line with this, Santos said the government had identified 10 key industries that would be the focus of government support programs this year. The industries are agribusiness, health and wellness, information and communications technology, electronics, motor vehicles, energy, infrastructure, tourism, shipping/shipbuilding, and jewelry and fashion.

Support programs will include easy access to financing and trade promotions to be organized by the Department of Trade and Industry, Santos said.

Semiconductor firm expanding operations

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE LOCAL UNIT OF A NASDAQ-listed semiconductor company is spending \$50 million or about P2.6 billion to relocate its factory from Paranaque City to the Carmelray Park II economic zone in Laguna.

Trade Secretary Peter B. Pavila said AMI Semiconductor Philippines Inc. was spending \$20 million for a 15-year lease agreement with ecozone developer ILQ Land Inc. and \$30 million for a new sorting and testing plant.

Favia said the investment was in line with the move of AMIS' Idaho-based parent firm

to consolidate its worldwide sort and test operations. Under the plan, some of the capacity in the US and Belgium will be transferred to the Philippine facility.

With the expansion, AMIS Philippines' business is expected to increase to \$220 million yearly from \$175 million.

The value of inputs from within the country, including materials and labor, would go up by 20 percent to an average of P100 million yearly.

AMIS, according to the DTI, is a leader in the designing and manufacturing of a broad range of integrated mixed-signal products, which are used largely by the automotive industry.

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BSP sees no need to raise key policy rates

By Doris C. Dumiao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG Pilipinas sees no need to match the fresh 25-basis point hike in the US key overnight rate yesterday.

BSP Governor Amado Tetangco Jr. said the US Federal Reserve's action yesterday did not come as a surprise.

"Given the projected easing of the inflation in the second half of this year, the slowdown in domestic liquidity growth and the positive performance of the peso, there seems to be no compelling reason to match the Fed move at this time," Tetangco said.

The global financial markets had expected the 25 basis-point hike in the US Fed rate to 4.5 percent.

American Express Bank economist Kevin Grice, in a com-

mentary sent to the Inquirer, said the Fed would likely raise its key rate again to 4.75 percent at its March Federal Open Market Committee meeting but it was expected to keep this rate until late 2006.

Tetangco yesterday announced a slowdown in the growth of domestic liquidity for the fourth straight month in December.

Domestic liquidity grew by 9.6 percent year-on-year in December to P2.32 trillion. The growth rate was slower than the 11.9 percent annual increase recorded in the previous month.

Domestic liquidity or m3 measures money supply—including money in circulation, demand deposits, money market funds and short-term repurchase agreements.

On a month-on-month basis, m3 expanded by almost 2.3 percent, higher than the 1.0 percent

growth in the previous month.

Growth in liquidity continues to be driven by strong inflows of foreign exchange remittances from overseas Filipino workers, as well as portfolio and direct investments, Tetangco said.

The deceleration in liquidity growth may be traced mainly to lower net credits to the public sector as a result of the improved fiscal performance, Tetangco said.

He pointed out that net lending to the national government declined by 9.8 percent in December following the significant build-up of national government deposits.

The BSP will continue to monitor the level of domestic liquidity to ensure that it remains consistent with our price stability objective. At the same time, the BSP will continue to pursue its efforts

to strengthen the banking system in order to ensure that credit activity proceeds in line with real sector activity," Tetangco said.

Local monetary authorities expect the country's inflation rate for the full year to range between 7.5 and 8.1 percent, peaking in the first semester.

They said that even the 4.5 percent revised inflation target for 2007 could be slightly breached if inflationary pressures persisted.

For this year, global energy prices remained the main source of uncertainty in the outlook for inflation given the limited global oil production capacity.

Also, price adjustments arising from the recent increase in the value-added tax to 12 percent from 10 percent are also expected to exert pressure on consumer prices in the short term.

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ZOOM-ZOOM

LIFESTYLE

Soft, silky 'taho' delivered

IN THE REAL WORLD, IT IS quite a struggle for people to prepare everything from soup to nuts, and to order food is sometimes a welcome thought, especially when it comes to dessert. Even for people like us who live in the kitchen, ordering food from time to time is a blissful exercise.

It was one of those days when my students were talking about where to order the best of the best. Judith Tiu mentioned her taho man and how impeccable his taho was.

The next day I had to cook for my sister Vicki's despedida. Apart from it being a terribly hectic day for me, since I was doing a twisted Pinoy menu, the thought of having taho on my dessert buffet was tempting.

So, order I did! A barrel each of almond and pandan. It was delivered to my doorstep, complete with sago, syrup, and even those blast-from-the-past taho ladies of my childhood.

I chased after Stanley Lim of Tofurific, the taho man himself, to ask what made his curd so soft, light and silky. I just had to know.

According to him, "Aside from choosing the beans very well, we use steam and pressure to cook the soy beans, contributing to the flavor of our taho, making it more yummy. (This is unlike) the conventional way of cooking that uses the kawa with panggatong, continuously stirring while cooking, otherwise, mangangamay sunog. The temperature from the panggatong is not controlled, making it quite difficult to come out with consistent end-products. We do not use this method in cooking our taho."

A lot of people make taho these days but excellent taho comes few and far between. Lim concentrates on taho by the barrel, selling them in three sizes—small, at P250, serves 10 to 12; medium, at P500, for 20-25; and large, at P800, for 50-55.

With prices like that, how can you go wrong? Lim's taho is delivered to your doorstep and comes in original, almond, pandan, ube, langka, strawberry and even chocolate flavors. The ube is excellent. Call 0917-8910886 or 3638750. If you are presentation-conscious, please specify wooden buckets when you order.

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KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aspiras

to process until the livers are whipped and of mousse-like consistency.

- Season to taste with salt and pepper
- Add liquor
- Transfer mixture to a terrine mold
- Top with a thin layer of ghee/clarified butter, approximately 1/3 cup. Ghee can be bought at Indian stores, or make your own clarified butter.
- Cover and chill for 10-12 hours.
- Serve with crackers.

Last week's caption for the steak photo should have read, "Meltique Steaks taste as good as they look." My apologies.

For comments or suggestions e-mail raspiras@inquirer.com.ph

WHAT'S ON

Catch the prince of pop as he promotes his latest album under Viva Records.

Mark Beaufit

Robinsons Malls

www.robinsons-malls.com

Discover



TAHO in a barrel from Tofurific

Chocolate Class and more...

Maya Kitchen will show you how to cook your way to a healthier heart & healthier relationships. Featured this month of love are chocolatey sweet recipes that you can make for your family and friends, plus low cholesterol dishes that are good for the heart and healthy life. Check the schedule below and enroll now!

Chocolate Workshop: Feb. 4 (Sat.) 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. Chocolate Mousse, Cheese cake, Chocolate chip cookies, Almond roca, Assorted chocolate coated candies & truffles. P900.

Brownie Plus Baking from prepared mixes: Feb. 4 (Sat.) 3 - 6 p.m. Black Forest Brownies, Apple Chunk, Rocky Road, Butterscotch squares, chocolate crinkles with frosting. P600.

Low Calorie & High Fiber Meals: Feb. 11 (Sat.) 8 - 2 p.m. Purse of onion leek & celery soup, Grilled chicken w/ salsa sauce, pork & lettuce rolls, crispy baked fish, tofu stroganoff, mango sorbet w/ lecture on how to calculate calorie requirements, tips on calorie cooking. P900.

Guilt Free Desserts: Feb. 11 (Sat.) 3 - 6 p.m. Peach Cobblers, Mandarin Orange Brulee, Fruit & Spice Bread Pudding, Apple Walnut Crumble, Lemon heart w/ strawberry sauce. P600.

Rice Toppings: Feb. 15 (Sat.) 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. Adobe Rice, Garlic Rice, Parsley Rice, Mushroom Gambas, Sweet & Sour Pork in Kasuba Rice including costing & packaging ideas. P800.

CERTIFICATE COURSES WITH HANDS-ON (Limited enrollment, Pre-registration required)

Basic Culinary: Feb. 7 - 10 / Feb. 21 - 24 (T-F) 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. Proper hygiene, sanitation and safety; nutrition and nutritional cooking; proper mis-en-place of mise-en-place of mirepoix, stocks, soups, sauces, marinades, use of herbs and spices combinations, proper purchasing, storage, techniques of disjointing and boning poultry, filleting fish and meat fabrication. With actual preparation of dishes from appetizer, salad eggs, pasta, seafoods, poultry and meats, dessert including garnishing for plate presentation. Free Mix & Match cookbook. P5,000.

Basic Cake Design: Feb. 11 & 18 (Sat) 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. Fundamentals of cake decorating; coloring; designing, template icing (bolled, caramel, chocolate, sugar, icing); basic borders, jelly lettering, basic flowers including bunching techniques, individual workshop on icing application and cake designing. P3,000.

Fundamentals of Bakery Production: Feb. 14-17/Feb. 28-Mar. 3 (T-F) 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. Standard baking techniques applicable to baking application on the use of ready mixes, yeast bread, quick breads, pies, cookies and cakes. P4,000.

Catering & Fastfood Business: Feb. 15 - 17 (W-F) 3 - 8 p.m. Legal & technical aspect to get started in catering business, facilities, personnel, menu including portioning and quantification. Actual cooking preparation of Stuffed Chicken Thighs, Vegetable Samosas, Spicy Chicken Wings, Eggplant Skordalia, Quiche Lorraine. P3,000 with free catering cookbook.

For inquiries, visit the Maya Kitchen (Tuesdays thru Saturdays) at 8th floor, Liberty Building, A. Arnaiz Ave. (Pasay Road), Makati City or call tel. 892-1188 or 892-5011 loc. 108; or e-mail us at mkitchen@ultimate.info.com.ph

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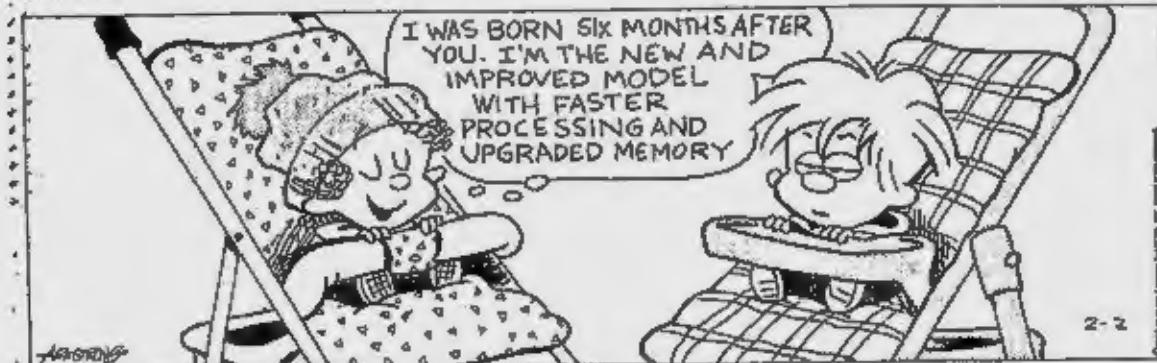
FOXTROT



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BY JESS ABRERA

MARVIN



BY TOM ARMSTRONG

PUGAD BABOY



BY P.M. JUNIOR

BABY BLUES



BY JERRY SCOTT

ATOMO AND WEBBOY



BY LYRA GARCELLANO

MUTTS



BY PATRICK McDONNELL

DIVINE COMEDY



BY STEVEN PABALINAS

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're cosmopolitan, sophisticated and downright classy. Artistically, you're extremely original. You make everything look easy. Many of you turn your hobbies into a career. It's important to believe in yourself, even if others don't understand you. In the year ahead, an important choice will arise. Choose wisely. You're starting to claim your power in the world.

Birthday of: Shakira, singer; Graham Nash, musician; Tom Smothers, comedy brother.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Be careful not to promise more than you can deliver, especially in situations where you are responsible for something. This also applies to how you handle shared property. Caution.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): In your attempt to please partners and bosses, you could lose your way. If you cannot do both, come clean. Don't promise the world if you can't deliver it.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Because you think fast, talk fast, work fast and move fast, you think you can deliver the impossible. But you put your pants on one leg at a time like everyone else. (Gonna remember this.)

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You have high hopes with close partnerships lately. Leos like to believe the best about their friends because they refuse to see the faults in their loved ones, especially their children.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): If you have to estimate the delivery time of something or how much you can do in a certain prescribed time, be careful. Don't bite off more than you can handle.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): It's easy to overdo partying, eating and drinking today. (Saying you were overserved is no excuse.) Avoid excess.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Don't make grandiose promises to family members, especially parents. For some reason, you're tempted to do this. (You know who you are.)

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Today (and yesterday) your eyes are bigger than your stomach. It's very easy for you to overextend yourself because you're naturally enthusiastic about everything. Be very careful right now.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Watch your money today. If something looks too good to be true, it is. Don't go out on a limb (you might fall off).

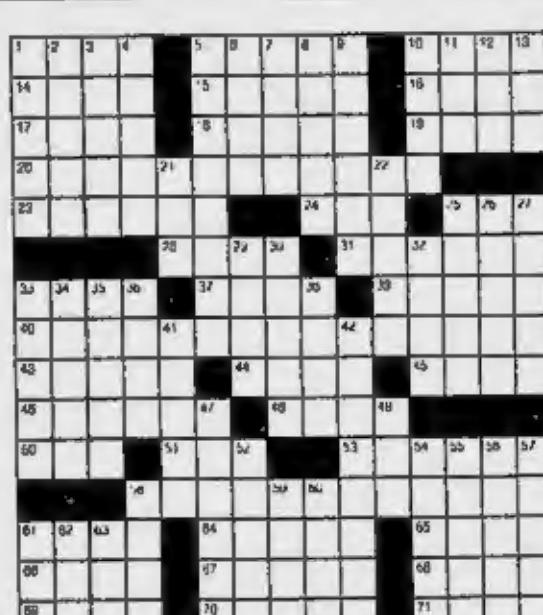
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): You have big ideas about travel, publishing and education right now. Try to stay realistic. Wait and see how things look in a few days. You need some time to get a better perspective.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You're ready to give a friend the shirt off your back today. While this is a noble impulse, make sure you have another shirt to wear. Don't bet the farm.

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- Milk type
- Piercing remarks
- Dregs
- Queen Boleyn
- Vigilant
- Black as pitch
- Hoarfrost
- Gymnast
- Comical
- Idyllic place
- Start of Evan Esar quote
- Intuitions
- Gender
- Messemse's milieu
- Sundance Kid's girl
- Moolah
- Related to)
- Messes up
- Mollycoddler
- Part 2 of quote
- Speak from a soapbox
- Calendar confuses
- Sicilian resort
- Kind of republic
- Faded and dull
- WSW opposite
- Harem room
- Writer Anatole
- End of quote
- Eager
- "Casablanca" co-star
- Go by Greyhound
- Entice
- Rub out
- Even once
- Checked out
- Makes an impression?
- Architect
- Scamper
- Ran's wraps
- Siletto or dagger
- "Newsboy" painter Harry
- Track events
- Handball
- Banned insecticide

By Alan P. Olachwang
Huntington Beach, CA

1 Cincinnati
2 ballplayers
3 Manchester
4 men
5 Remained
6 Place
7 Conclude
8 cut a living
9 Alternative w/d,
10 Professional
charge
11 Binary
compound
12 Become
established
13 Clean one's
leathers
14 Main trunk
15 Low card
16 Moved in a
carved path
17 Protuberance
18 Sun-dried brick
19 Sacred text of
Islam
20 Puerile
21 bene
22 Char slightly
23 Mortise's
partner

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GENERAL EXPENSES
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11 ELEVEN RAT TUBE
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42 Conscripts
47 Beloved
49 Bikini part
52 Love to places
54 Come to terms
55 Artless
56 Apple drink
57 Febrero
58 Ripened
59 Tahitian's
country
60 Formerly,
formerly
61 Stoul
alternative
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22/06

BEN



BY DANIEL SHELTON

KIKO MACHINE



BY MANIX ABRERA

LOVEKNOTS



BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO

TULDOK



BY PAPU AND TUM MILAMBILING



BY PAPU AND TUM MILAMBILING

The necessary side dish

PARES, "THE ORIGINAL PARES," banners its distinction on its marquee on Espana Avenue in Manila. I've always been curious about that place and vowed to go there one day. I still haven't.

Does the name mean that food served there are in pairs? Or is the restaurant named after the owner, the friendly pare (male friend) who didn't know how to use an apostrophe (e.g. Robinsons)?

If foods served there are in pairs, then the eatery practices the traditional way of Filipino eating. Some food need to be served with a side dish.

It isn't known when this practice started, or why, but the pairing suits our taste.

The classic pairing is dinuguan at puto. While puto can be eaten by itself or with other dishes, the blood stew seems incomplete without this native rice cake. In Marilao, Bulacan, one place has done putong Puto for more than 50 years so the adjoining restaurant serves dinuguan and pancit palabok as its mainstays, the perfect pair for the puto.

'Pancit' and 'tokwa'

On the other hand, pancit palabok or pancit Malabon can be paired with tokwa's baby. The latter, if done properly, involves boiling pig's ears and tongue, frying the fermented soy-bean cake and slicing it into cubes, then mixing them in a sauce of soy-vinegar with lots of chopped onions.

My husband, who dislikes tokwa, always orders the all-pork version, which my sons have christened "baboy at baboy."

In areas that enjoy fermented rice with either fish or shrimp (burn and balo-balo in Pampanga, balaw-balaw in Rizal), it's a must to serve the dish with the inihaw na isda, and always with mustasa leaves.



PUTO Popular white and red are paired with pancit palabok (right) and dinuguan.

COUNTRY COOKING

Micky Penix



Every Friday, many homes still serve mongo soup with paksiw na isda. It's a carryover from those days when Fridays meant abstaining from meat unless your mongo soup has crushed chicharon like ours sometimes.

In the Visayas, mongo is paired with escabeche, which is not like the sweet-and-sour fish in Luzon but is a version of paksiw with yellow ginger or turmeric (dilaw). It was also by accident that I discovered how mongo soup with ampalaya leaves, when paired with sweet-and-sour anything, turned the mix terribly bitter.

'Sinigang' and 'lumpia'

Years ago, in a small canteen in Malate, the Thursday menu was always sinigang na baboy with vegetable lumpiang prito. It was, for me, perfect, the sour soup contrasting with the crisp lumpia. For others, sinigang is always good with any inihaw, a combination of wet and dry.

Families have their own special pairings. Sonny Tinio, culture cognoscenti, spoke of his father's boiled red shrimps with sliced green mangoes and bugoong alamang. Cocio, the Bicol fish sinigang, is always eaten with pili fruit and kuyog, fermented small samal in rice.

In her cookbook, "Let's Cook with Nona" (Bookman Printing House, 1979), Nora Daza paired lechon cooked in the oven with candied sweet yams or sweet potatoes baked in syrup and butter. In her other book, "A Culinary Life" (Anvil Publishing, 1992), two boiled dishes are served with their respective sauces. Cocio is served with Spanish tomatada, a rich tomato sauce, and puchero with an eggplant sauce.

Daza gave another pairing of crisp



adobo flakes with kare-kare that she said Glenda Barretto served at her former restaurant, the Nielson Tower in Makati. I found that combination of a meat dish with another meat dish odd. But others volunteered binagoongan baboy or kilawing librillo (tripe stewed in vinegar) with kare-kare.

When I mentioned those pairings, Felice Prudente Sta. Maria, author of several historical and cultural books, began to enumerate even more extensive kare-kare pairings.

'Kare-kare' menu

With information gathered from the Cruz family of Cavite, Sta. Maria texted me the complete kare-kare (alternate spelling) menu. That included begoong alamang, white rice, kilawin of banana blossoms, boiled or steamed shrimps and chicken adobo that's fried crisp.

This package was sold by vendors in Cainta and other Pasig towns close to the route of the old Antipolo pilgrim-

age. In these riverbank towns, pilgrims transferred to hammocks (for women) and to horses (for men) to make the climb to the Antipolo hills.

Sta. Maria also mentioned how her father's kin in Rosario, Cavite, served boiled shrimp with adobo.

My adobo pairing is always with banana, the latundan variety. My friend Chit Lijauco said that, in her hometown of Sta. Rosa Laguna, the practice of eating viands with fruits was called nag-puputat.

In Marikina, a kind of fruit salad is served with fried fish. The salad is really ginumis, the concoction of sago with galaman and pinipig, plus slices of kaimito, lakatan and chico (whatever is in season) in gatang hilaw or cold uncooked coconut milk.

It ensures that the oily aftertaste of the fried fish is washed off by this refreshing dessert.

E-mail me at pinkyfood04@yahoo.com

Dishing out happiness and luck

TO USHER IN THIS YEAR OF THE Fire Dog, Knorr Real Chinese Soups introduces 12 lucky dishes concocted by Susan Quimico, a "Makuhu Ka sa Tikim" diva, and Lorraine Timbol, Unilever Foods activation consultant. Each dish has been created to go with the forecast for the year for each of 12 animal signs of the zodiac, according to feng shui expert Victor Wang.

These 12 lucky recipes that will enable women to cook for good luck are: Hot and Sour Soup for Perfect Balance, Chicken Soup for Romance, Chicken Patties for Positive Chi, Knorr Chinese Pancit Canton, Mixed Seafood Treasure Soup, Nido Misua for Abundance, Nido Potato Soup of Wealth, Pork and Two Kinds Mushroom, Yin and Yang Soup, Three Pearl Crab and Corn, Pork with Tokwa in Hot and Sour Sauce, Nido Onion Soup. Knorr shares a few of these recipes below.

As their way of spreading good luck in a bowl, Knorr is also going to malls all over Luzon to give mall-goers a taste of its lucky soups. After SM Manila, SM Centerpoint, SM Baclaran, SM San Lazaro, Ever Commonwealth and Landmark, the soup tastings will move to other SM and Robinsons malls in Luzon as well as in Glorietta, Market Market, Festival Mall, Shangri-La Mall, Gateway, Ali Mall, Alabang Town Center, Star Mall Edsa, Tutuban Center, and Riverbanks Mall throughout the two-week Lunar New Year celebration.

Nido Misua for Abundance

(For Monkeys)

1 c chicken breast fillet, cut into cubes (for happiness)
½ tbsp Knorr Liquid Seasoning
1 tbsp cooking oil
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1 pack Knorr Nido Oriental Real Chinese Soup dissolved in 4 c water
1 pc egg (for fertility/abundance)
1 c misua noodles (for health and



CHICKEN Patties for Positive Chi



NIDO Misua for Abundance

long life)

Spring onions, finely chopped
Marinate the chicken breast in Knorr Liquid Seasoning for 30 minutes. In a pan with hot oil, sauté the chicken breast with garlic. Pour in the dissolved Knorr Nido Oriental Real Chinese Soup. Add one egg, then stir with a fork. Add the misua noodles. When cooked, top with spring onions and serve hot.

Chicken Soup for Romance

(For Rabbits)

1 pack Knorr Chicken and Corn Real Chinese Soup with egg (for happiness and marriage)
3 ½-4 c water
1 egg
5 hard-boiled eggs (for love and fertility)
Dried alamang, pan-fried
For the Chinese, chicken symbolizes happiness and marriage. Dis-

solve Knorr Chicken and Corn Real Chinese Soup in 3-4 c water. Simmer until soup thickens then add 1 egg and continue stirring until egg is well dispersed. Put five boiled eggs in separate bowls. Pour the soup in each bowl, then top with pan-fried alamang.

Chicken Patties for Positive Chi

(For Roosters)

2 pc small carrots, chopped
3 tbsp fresh wonsay, chopped
4 tbsp cornstarch
4 tbsp all-purpose flour
2 tbsp sugar
5 tbsp soy sauce
2 tbsp Knorr Liquid Seasoning
2 pc eggs
1 tsp black pepper powder
3 tbsp sesame oil
1 pack Knorr Pork and Mushroom Real Chinese Soup (pork for wealth)
1/3 c water

1 tbsp toasted garlic

Mix the first 11 ingredients and add half of the Knorr Pork and Mushroom Real Chinese Soup. Mix very well. Shape the mixture into round patties (about 3" circles) and pan-fry until golden brown. In a separate pan, dissolve the remaining Knorr Pork and Mushroom Real Chinese Soup in water and simmer until it thickens. Pour the sauce onto the chicken patties and top with toasted garlic.

CHICKEN Soup for Romance

(For Monkeys)

1 c chicken breast fillet, cut into cubes (for happiness)
½ tbsp Knorr Liquid Seasoning
1 tbsp cooking oil
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1 pack Knorr Nido Oriental Real Chinese Soup dissolved in 4 c water
1 pc egg (for fertility/abundance)
1 c misua noodles (for health and

long life)

Spring onions, finely chopped
Marinate the chicken breast in Knorr Liquid Seasoning for 30 minutes. In a pan with hot oil, sauté the chicken breast with garlic. Pour in the dissolved Knorr Nido Oriental Real Chinese Soup. Add one egg, then stir with a fork. Add the misua noodles. When cooked, top with spring onions and serve hot.

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A guided tour of French cooking

Text and photos by Michael Fenix

FRENCH FLAGS WERE FLYING ALL over the buffet table. It was part of the décor as well as a sign that French food was being featured at the Raphael Café of the Holiday Inn Galleria Manila (lunch buffet until March 14).

Executive chef Cyrille Soenen cooked the food of his home country and that was reassuring. He also served as guide to the cuisine, providing background and explanations for particular dishes.

Take steak tartare. For many people at our table, it wasn't something to be eaten but to be wary of. This raw minced beef dish is not as popular as the raw fish choices or the Japanese sashimi. So they looked on as some of us partook of the dish, including Soenen.

At the steak tartare table, one of Soenen's assistants mixed the meat with whatever accompaniments such as onions, egg yolk, mustard and capers and the liquid flavors like Worcestershire sauce and Tabasco. The meat mixture was shaped like a hamburger patty and served with fries on a small plate with mustard and mayonnaise.

While one instinctively knows

how to eat the steak tartare, it was worthwhile watching how the French ate it. Everyone looked at Soenen as he took a bite of the steak, ate the fries with his fork, unlike those of us who picked up the fries the way we did at a fast food restaurant.

Steak tartare, according to the chef, was what Parisians ate after partying. It's akin to our tapsilog or even goto with lugaw, a pick-me-up snack before snoozing.

Certainly French were the liver pâté and the variety of cheeses. They did not have to wait long for takers since there were some of us who could subsist on just those. The pâté was done so well we could have moved from there to the dessert. But there were main dishes waiting.

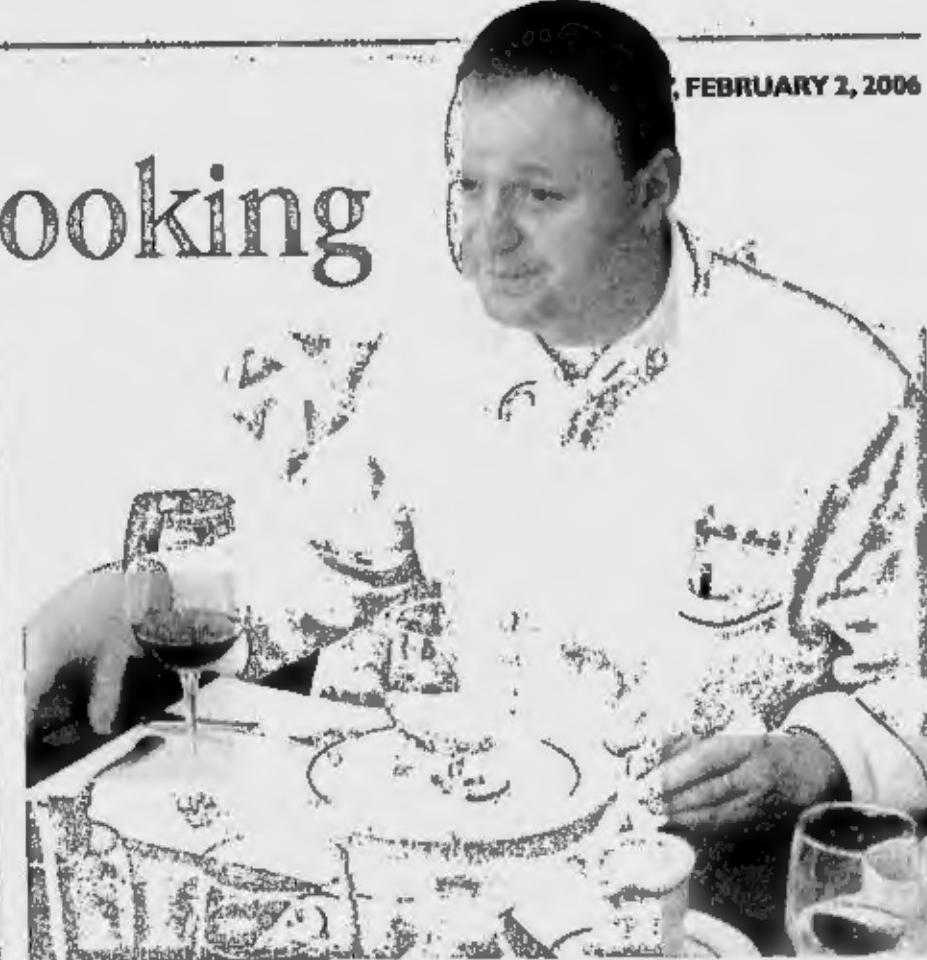
According to the promotional brochure, the kind of French cooking served for this festival was the *cuisine du terroir*, regional specialties that meant traditional cooking. Hence, expect dishes like *moules à la marinère* (mussels in white wine and garlic), *blanquette de veau* (veal stew) and *pot-au-feu* (boiled beef dinner).

Chef Soenen looked puzzled that there was no wine to accompany this proper French meal. But, on each table, a list of the wines were available, French, of course. He ordered for everyone.

After the steak, the pâté, a cream soup of leeks and potatoes, it was time for dessert. The dessert portion occupies about a third



GÂTEAU Saint-Honoré for the birthday honoree



EXECUTIVE chef Cyrille Soenen

of the whole buffet lineup. And if you see the choices, you'll have to breathe deeply to search for some space in your body so you can take everything you want.

I'd recommend the Madeleine dipped in chocolate, which was excellent. Some items were familiar, like the Gâteau Saint-Honoré, a cake surrounded by puff pastry, and the *flâne* or floating island, meringue surrounded by a creamy

custard, similar to the *canonigo*.

Parting gift

The eating didn't stop there because each one was given a parting gift, a special one baked by the chef. The *Canele de Bordeaux* was a Y-shaped small cake baked in a specific *canele* container. The *canele* was the official cake of the city of Bordeaux invented by the sisters of the

Sainte-Eulalie convent. The texture is like a *mamon* flavored with rum and vanilla, with a little bitter taste probably because the exterior is a bit burnt. But the bitter is a good counterpoint to the generally sweet cake.

By gifting us with the *Canele de Bordeaux*, chef Soenen kept with the tradition of giving the cake as a *souvenir*. That *souvenir*, however, did not last long.

Managing a Catering Business

MB&G/ProActive is conducting a seminar-workshop on Managing a Catering Business, 1-5 p.m., February 13-17, 2006, Ortigas Complex, Pasig City.

Reservations are currently being accepted on a first-come-first-served basis. For more details, call Mr. Manu Ofiara at 821-3583 or 0915-4315375. Seminar fee is P5,000.00 per participant inclusive of all workshop materials.

The five-day training will cover, among other topics, planning the menu, equipment and personnel; costing, pricing, cost control and marketing.

MB&G/ProActive has been in the business of training foodservice executives and business owners since 1989.

Advt.

Pag-Ibig members have to wait to get back contributions

THE CONSUMER

Marietta Velasco Giron



A PAG-IBIG MEMBER, WHO QUIT HER regular job some six years ago wanted to know if she would be able to withdraw her contributions.

She wrote to Pag-Ibig to inquire about the requirements for withdrawal of contributions. She did not have any outstanding obligations with the institution having paid off her housing loan a year or two after she left her job.

This is Pag-Ibig's answer to her query:

"Please be informed that a member of Pag-Ibig may withdraw his/her savings only under the following conditions (whichever comes first):

pevos
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• Maturity, where a member has completed 20 years of active fund membership and 240 contributions;

• Retirement, where a member has reached the mandatory retirement age of 65, the optional retirement age of 60, or has opted to avail of his company's early retirement at age 45;

• Permanent departure from the country;

• Permanent/total physical disability;

• Insanity;

• Termination from service by reason of health

• Death of member

If a member qualified under any of those conditions, she would have to fill up an application for

Provident Benefits to be submitted, together with other requirements to the branch or regional office where your remittances are made.

In the meantime, she would not be eligible for any of the Pag-Ibig. If she wanted to continue enjoying them, Pag-Ibig said:

"You can opt to reactivate your membership to avail of your benefits as a member. To do so, just approach the nearest branch and request for reactivation. You will be asked to fill out the Members Data Form and present some proof of income. This proof will depend on your source of income at present. For further information regarding membership reactivation, you can call the Makati marketing division at 8114014."

Asked for further clarification, Pag-Ibig said, "When a member stops remitting contributions, his/her account becomes inactive but remains intact until such time that the member qualifies for withdrawal of savings or the account is reactivated either by reemployment or by the member as a voluntary payor. Even as the account remains inactive, it will continue to earn dividends every year."

So there. People without regular jobs who

may have hoped they could withdraw their contributions to Pag-Ibig so they would be able to use the money would have to resign themselves to a long wait, if they do not qualify under those conditions mentioned earlier.

Fake collector

A man who had been victimizing Maynilad customers since 1999 was arrested last week right inside the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System compound. The same man was convicted earlier by the Manila Metropolitan Trial Court for posing as a Maynilad employee.

The suspect allegedly collected money from customers and issued them fake documents.

According to Maynilad official Florencio T. Cayco, the impostor, named Carlos Santos, would (supposedly) conduct an investigation and claim that he had uncovered an illegal connection. This allowed him to extort money from the customer, who would be willing to pay so his water connection won't be cut off.

Cayco said Santos used at least seven aliases to victimize unsuspecting Maynilad Water Services Incorporated customers.

Readers' feedback

Myrna Dizon of Newton, Makati, sent us a thank-you letter for Maynilad. "I am glad we finally got action on our complaint. Hurray! A repair crew from Maynilad came to repair the leaking pipe in our neighborhood."

From C.N. Wang of Cebu City: "I have noticed the proliferation of advertisements on cable stations lately. Correct me if I am wrong, but isn't the concept of cable (all about being free) of these ads? (Isn't that what we pay for?) Or have the rules changed?"

Concerned consumer E. Rosales warns readers of two scams that almost trapped him. One was a "special offer" from a woman-caller who seductively invited him on a date so she could show him the expensive discount card she was selling. When he accepted the invitation, she asked for his credit card number.

The woman, however, did not show up for their date. Moreover, he found out later that the cost of the discount card was charged to his credit card account. And that's not all there is to it. The card was not honored by the establishments listed in the manual sent to him.

"It took me two months to request my credit card company to return my money," Rosales said.

The other scam was a telephone call from a certain company announcing that Rosales had won a gift certificate for a three-days-and-two-nights' stay in a triple "A" resort. When he went to claim the prize, he was told he should first buy an insurance package. The cost of the package would deplete his savings, Rosales said.

Deli Snack

SINFUL & DIVINE

This month of love, we give you sinful and divine experiences. Let our freshly baked Breads, Heavenly Cakes and Pralines, mildly seasoned fine herbs and spices of Cold Cuts and Sausages say it all. At the Deli Snack, it's another DELLicious treat.



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MONTH

Breads: Caraway Rye Bread • Apple Cinnamon Comb
Cakes: Nougatine Cake • Chocolate Cheesecake
Cold Cuts and Sausages: Chambignon Cold Cuts • Valentine Smoked Sausage
Perfect Gifts on Valentine's Day: Heart Shaped Cake • Choco Praline Box

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Gourmet Classes with Chef Dennis Hipolito

#137 9th Street corner Baleta Drive, New Manila, Quezon City
About Chef Dennis: Dennis is a 1st graduate at the Culinary Institute of America, Hyde Park, NY/Food Stylist/Owner of Jecarlos Cakes/ Took over classes from the famed Gourmet Baker Aquiles Jimenez in New Mexico/Trained under the tutelage of World Pastry Cup Champion Ed King Hu of the Ritz Carlton Chicago (a Four Seasons Hotel, Dan's Best of Park Avenue Cafe Chicago, Cafe Stylized Betty Van Heusen, Food Stylist Dutchie Custer and other instructors at Illo Philippines)

BAKING CLASSES (Saturdays)

February 4, 2006: CAKES & TORTES III (Simply Irresistible)

NEW CLASS: Frozen Mango Mousse Torte, Mocha Almond Sam Rival, Melts in the Mouth Brazo Torta, Blueberry Cheesecake Torta P1600

February 11, 2006: CHOCOLATE...CHOCOLATE (Decadent Chocolate Desserts)

NEW CLASS: Triple Chocolate Fudge Roll, Flourless Chocolate Torte, No Bake Chocolate and Hazelnut Torta, Double Chocolate Muffins, Silken Fudge Brownie Tart P1600

February 18, 2006: CAKES AND TORTES II (A Repeat of our Favorites)

NEW CLASS: Mocha Cream Cake, Orange Fantasy Cake, Quick Chocolate Mousse Cake, Ube Cake P1600

February 25, 2006: DELECTABLE PIES (To Die For Pies)

Banana Cream Pie, Dulce de Leche Pie, Crunched Pecan Pie, Egg Pie in Flaky Crust, Lemon Meringue Pie P1600

COOKING CLASSES (Wednesdays)

*Featuring a Series of Classes of RECIPES by Famed Gourmet MAUR LICHAU CO

February 8, 2006: IN MAUR LICHAU CO'S KITCHEN 1 (Light Meals)

NEW CLASS: Eggplant Appetizer, Muffuletta Sandwich, Quiche Lorraine Maur Lichauco, German Potato Salad, Roasted Vegetable Salad, 2 Kinds of Dressings P1700

February 15, 2006: IN MAUR LICHAU CO'S KITCHEN 2

NEW CLASS: Chicken Liver Pate, Baked Fish Alexandra (Hollandeuse Sauce), Flank Steak with Potato Casserole, Chicken Moreno P1700

February 22, 2006: IN MAUR LICHAU CO'S KITCHEN 3

NEW CLASS: Cold Pasta, Mashed Potatoes, Cannelloni, Sun Dried Tomato Pasta, Fettuccine Marinara, Country Style Chicken Kiev P1700

*Call or Text 0917-8486656/0928-7912128 or email us at gourmetpastry@aol.com, for reservations. *Ask for GIRARD or YVETTE.

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